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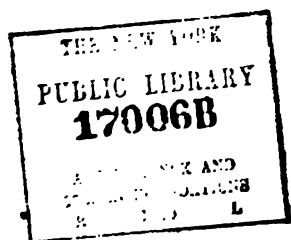
BY

Elizabeth Hazlewood Hancock

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BETTY PEMBROKE

CHAPTER I

THE seventh day of March of the year Betty was ten was cold and blustery—just the kind of weather that makes one feel that something is going to happen.

The wind gathered its forces in the mountains and then swept through the valleys with raging violence, carrying blinding sheets of dust, breaking off rotten limbs of trees, and blowing down rail fences which happened to be in a tottering condition at The Oaks, the ancestral home of Betty's maternal people, the Terrells.

The old homestead lay on an eminence in a long, open stretch of fair Virginia country. It was hemmed in on the north and west by the thickly wooded Carter's Mountain, at the foot of which lay the homes of the well-to-do; and on the south and east by the Flatwoods, equally dense save for the small plots of land cleared, which gave faint evidence of the many human beings whose lives and destinies, and poverty, and ignorance, and latent talents it concealed. The dark gray boundaries, running parallel like two broad, firmly stretched bands, disappeared at the same time over

the hills in the distance, leaving the impression that they would never meet and that the cleared lands between them went on forever. The Oaks was part of the old plantation known as the Indian Camp lands. Beneath the wide-spreading giants which gave the place its name many an arrowhead, and even a tomahawk or two, had been found to suggest the probability of the savage battles which, tradition said, had in times long gone by made the peaceful place, so smiling in its green fields and gentle streams, ring with terrible war-whoops.

Aunt Lucy, the good-natured, yellow-faced cook, listened out in her little brick house in the yard that memorable night of March 7th, when the troubled wind shrieked to the creaking oaks wild messages of evil spirits abroad in the land and then tore off furiously in the direction of the Flatwoods. The fierce discourse seemed ever increasing; the house shook and quivered and rocked, as if throbbing to tell something it knew; the window-shutter blew open, slammed a time or two, then was torn off and hurled to the ground with a thud; a gust, straying recklessly, blew a twirl of stifling smoke down the chimney, and the tongs, leaning drunkenly by the fireside, fell crashing to the floor. Aunt Lucy's panic-stricken soul made sure that the hour had come, and that the sinning world had been caught napping and not watching. To add to the abomination of her desolation, her little girl, her only companion, slept



on through it all, breathing with irritating regularity till she could stand it no longer. She shook Charlotte, and succeeded in partially arousing her from her profound slumber.

"Git up f'om dyah, gall!" she shouted excitedly. "Come on! I gwine ter de big house. De Judgment Day's done come."

"Augh, hysh, Mammy," answered Charlotte drowsily, provoked at being disturbed; "who ever heerd o' de Judgment *Day* comin' in de night?" Then she pulled up the covers and slept more soundly than ever.

"Dat is so," thought Aunt Lucy thankfully, as she raked up the coals in the fireplace and threw in a lightwood knot to try to make things more cheerful. Then she said to herself aloud, "But dyah is suppen 'bout comin' like a thief in de night, too, an' I gwine set hyah, 'cayse I wants ter be found prepyared."

Betty, snugly tucked in her canopied bed in her large room above her mother's, did not know whether the disturbance of the elements lasted during the night or not; but she slept uneasily, though sheltered by the "big house." Early the next morning she slipped on her pink outing wrapper and knitted bedroom slippers, ran down the back stairway, crossed the narrow hall to her mother's bedroom, and stood before the fire which Aunt Lucy had just kindled. The windows of the large room opened south and east toward the

the hills in the distance, leaving the impression that they would never meet and that the cleared lands between them went on forever. The Oaks was part of the old plantation known as the Indian Camp lands. Beneath the wide-spreading giants which gave the place its name many an arrowhead, and even a tomahawk or two, had been found to suggest the probability of the savage battles which, tradition said, had in times long gone by made the peaceful place, so smiling in its green fields and gentle streams, ring with terrible war-whoops.

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Flatwoods. The massive mahogany furniture was beautifully kept, the great brass andirons, fender, tongs, and shovel shone in the firelight, and Aunt Lucy, haggard from lack of sleep, waited for instructions about breakfast. She saw that Betty had dark rings around her blue eyes, and that she, too, looked troubled, so she began to stroke her heavy reddish-brown hair sympathetically.

"Mamma," Betty began, as Mrs. Pembroke, hearing them, parted the flowered curtains of her bed, and looked out, "I had an awful night. I dreamt I saw two bad-looking men draw a sheep and a ram over a table in a narrow, dark place and kill them with a big knife, and the blood flew!"

"Hysh, Betty, hysh, honey," said Aunt Lucy, nervously; "it's bad luck ter tell dreams befo' breakfus'."

"Can't help it, Aunt Lucy; it's on my mind and I'm obliged to tell you all about it. Then I saw an old lady in a coffin, and those men were dragging it all around. Then I saw a lot of people take a fat old woman and hang her to a tree, and they shot at her with pistols. Then I saw a red-headed, bare-footed young woman down by a creek; she saw somebody and was scared about something, and ran to a little house on a hill near by."

"It was only a dream, dear. Don't bother about it now. Forget it as quickly as you can,"

said Mrs. Pembroke, soothingly. "Maybe you ate too much supper."

Betty was pale with excitement and she had spoken with restless energy. The dream had been vivid and evidently had made an extraordinary impression.

Aunt Lucy was naturally susceptible to such influence. "When chillun gits ter dreamin' like dat," she said, "'tis a mighty bad sign an' suppen's gwine come of it. Miss Sophie, don't you remember Marse Archie's horses tooken run away an' mos' kill a man de day after Tommie dreamt dat a Injun shot him? I'll be oneasy all day, skeered dat I gwine hear dat suppen awful happen somewhere las' night," and she went back to the kitchen so full of foreboding that she screamed when the cat jumped down off the meal chest. In a little while a rooster came to the kitchen door and set up a continual crowing, till she slapped the flour from her hands, put down the "sifter" she had been plying back and forth in the way Betty often tried in vain to imitate, and went out and "shoo-o-ed" him away, saying: "My nose already itchin', an' hyah you crowin' at de do', so's ter mek sho dat somebody'll come hyah ter-day. I don' wan' see no toter o' bad news."

Windy weather always makes country people uneasy, and Aunt Lucy slipped around the corner of the house and peeped down the road time and again to see if anybody was coming; but the day

wore on without visitors till quite late in the afternoon. Aunt Lucy had just put some wood on the fire in Mrs. Pembroke's room and was beginning to wipe off the mahogany wardrobe with a silk handkerchief, Betty was standing by her mother's bureau idly sticking pins in the quaint, stuffed little chair of a pincushion, and Mrs. Pembroke was busily crocheting mats for her table, when Tommie Terrell, her twelve-year-old nephew, just from the Cherry Hill post-office, burst in upon them.

"Aunt Sophie," he cried, excitedly, "somebody killed old Mr. and Mrs. Metlow down in the Flatwoods last night! The hired boy went off fishing, and when he got back this morning the old people were dead in the hall—both murdered with an ax!"

"Oh, Tommie, how horrible!" Mrs. Pembroke exclaimed. "It can't be true! Why, I was down there yesterday and didn't leave till five o'clock. They asked me to spend the night, and I came very near doing it. You *must* be mistaken!"

"No'm, I ain't," Tommie insisted; "papa has locked up our house, and Uncle Jim sent me to stay with you all to-night. They have gone with a big crowd of men down to the Metlows', and 'tain' no tellin' what's goin' happen befo' mornin'."

"'Tain' no tellin' what's goin' happen befo' mornin'" were the very words he had overheard one big, determined countryman say to another at

the post-office. He was wrought up to a tremendous state of excitement. His white hair accentuated its usual tendency to stand up in a cowlick and his face was pale and strange.

"What's gwine come of us all!" Aunt Lucy groaned, having kept herself worked up all day for trouble. "Hyah we is lef' in dis great big house wid nothin' but a twelve-year-old boy fer purtection, an' de neighborhood right full o' murderers!"

"Hush, Lucy," said Mrs. Pembroke, who had regained her self-control, "don't get these children any more excited than they already are. We've stayed in this house many times with nothing to protect us but a shot-gun. We will all stay in the big north room together—you can make a pallet for yourself and Charlotte. Betty can sleep with me, and you can fix one of the little beds for Tommie. The room has only one door and I can guard that without any trouble."

"But you always was spunky, Miss Sophie, an' I ain't; I'm jes' a-trimblin' now." Aunt Lucy was on the verge of collapse and Betty listened in awed silence.

"Go ahead, Lucy, and get supper, so that the children can go to bed," commanded Mrs. Pembroke, who, though horrified by the tragedy, was not unnerved.

She was tall and imposing in appearance—the kind of woman who is always cool and self-pos-

sessed. When others were shaken with fear, she lived up to her people's motto, "Sans Crainte." She now busied herself with seeing that the keys were turned in all the big brass locks on the heavy doors and that the green window-shutters of the great house were securely fastened; then she saw that all the firearms—which fortunately she knew how to use—were loaded and ready in case of an emergency. All the while the thought of the horrible deed was in her mind, and her own narrow escape made her blood run cold. She had ridden home alone the day before after deciding, despite the earnest solicitations of the lonely old couple, and the increasing violence of the wind, that it would be better to return. She wondered if the fierce weather could have precipitated in some evil mind the wicked impulse to do that deed; and, if so, she wondered if, oppressed by the lull that then enveloped the world in such a solemn, prophetic, soul-baring stillness, like a heavy mantle of awe, that brutal heart would feel the tremendous weight of its irreparable crime, for which the curse was still, as of old: "A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be upon the earth." The night's very calm seemed to her a protection.

Aunt Lucy fairly quaked with fear as the darkness increased, and the swift fulfillment of Betty's uncanny dream lurked uncomfortably in her superstitious soul—she thought maybe it was a warning that they would be the next victims of the

murderer. The children, like her, could not conceal their excitement. When they went to bed they had a feeling that times were indeed awful, and that perhaps they ought to stay awake all night and watch for the coming of the fiend, whose stealthy footsteps they might locate if they listened.

The house at The Oaks stood facing the road that ran parallel with the mountains. Beyond the road on an opposite hill was the white frame house of the "Widder Barnes," whose little farm ran all the way back to the mountains and adjoined on the southwest the estate of Tommie's father. On Hickory Hill, a small plot at the edge of a thicket that bordered both places, was the school-house. The teacher boarded with the widow and occupied the northeast room, facing the road; Tommie noted with satisfaction that he kept his light burning that night.

The big north room where they slept had two advantages: it was over the dining-room, where the family silver was kept, and it was at the end of a narrow hall, where footsteps could be heard before the room could be reached.

CHAPTER II

NOTHING happened to the little party at The Oaks that night, and the next morning Betty and Tommie stood at one of the parlor windows so as to watch the people pass along the main road, that lay between them and the mountain, on their way to the scene of the murder. Just before they got to the Cherry Hill post-office, a mile away, the children could see them turn into the Flatwoods road, which met the mountain road at right angles.

The news had spread like wild-fire, and men came from every direction, greeting one another gloomily and showing in their solemn faces the one thought, Who did it, and how dared they? It had been a peaceful, law-abiding community, and the people had been accustomed to living without any uneasiness, so this dark deed stirred popular feeling as nothing had ever stirred it before.

When Mr. Pembroke reached home late that afternoon, Betty, Tommie, and Aunt Lucy listened almost breathlessly to his account of what had happened. He had spent the night and day at the Metlow house, a two-story frame building with a basement, rather more pretentious in appearance than the ordinary Flatwoods establishment. The thrifty old couple who had been

so cruelly murdered were known to keep money about them. Mr. Pembroke spoke of this, and of the perfect condition of their little place, so fiendishly despoiled by some felon's hand.

"When we got there," he said, addressing his conversation to Mrs. Pembroke, "groups of grim, determined men were scattered about the yard discussing every possible theory about the murder and who might prove to be the guilty person. I noticed three of the Flatwoods teamsters talking together by a tree, and I had not been there long when one of them called me aside and said:

" 'Now, I don' mean ter suspicion no person, Mr. Pembroke, but we all know that murder will out, an' it's our business ter find out who done this black deed. Yistiddy, when I was drivin' my team ter town, Lennie Reder jined me jes' befo' we got ter the railroad crossin' an' him an' me went on up inter town tergether. Lennie had a roll o' bills bigger'n I ever saw any of 'em have befo', an' when I spoke 'bout how well off he seemed ter be, he told me his brother John from out West was at home an' had gin him the money that morning. That John always was a hard case, an' I hoped he was still in the penitentiary out yander in Tennessee. You can jes' put two an' two together out o' what I done tole you an' see what you make on it. You see, Lennie an' his mother an' his sister Sallie is all here ter-day—but *whar's John?*'

"I told him I thought the matter was worth looking into; and when he left me, three of us decided to interview the Reder family separately, and see what we could gather. The old woman told me that her son John had not been home for years; at the same time Lennie was stating, in a different room, that his mother, John, and Sallie had spent the early part of the night of the 7th away from home, telling him that they had gone to a neighbor's. He also said his brother gave him the money yesterday morning and sent him to town to buy some things. We took Lennie's evidence as the most trustworthy, as Sallie told a rambling sort of tale, and three men rode off to the Reder house to capture John. He was evidently on the watch, however, and, seeing them coming, jumped out of the window of the loft, and was lost in the woodlands before they could overtake him. They searched the house and found a bundle of bloody clothes. Both Lennie and Sallie swore the garments belonged to their brother. Poses of men have gone in every direction to look for the murderer; the other three have been sent to jail."

Betty was wrought up to the highest pitch.

"What did the murderer look like, papa?" she asked, excitedly. "Was he tall and dark, with a big scar on his forehead; or was he short and bald-headed, with a hooked-nose and a stubby mustache?"

"The description of him is tall and dark, with a big scar: how did you know?"

"I dreamt about it. There were two of them—I saw them plainly," she answered solemnly.

"An' she tooken dream 'bout a fat ole 'oman, an' Mrs. Reder is short an' fat; an' 'bout a red-headed gal, an' dat Sal Reder is red-headed if anybody ever was: an', what's mo', she tole me an' Miss Sophie 'bout dat dream 'fo' we heerd 'bout de murder," said Aunt Lucy, talking as fast as she could and thinking it as plain an interpretation as was Joseph's of old.

The murderer, however, was still at large. People began to lock doors which had not had a key turned in them for years, and to take all kinds of precautions, which showed what a mighty change had come over the spirit of the neighborhood. The children at play kept an eye out for John Reder, and when they rode along they confidently expected he might step out from behind any tree on the roadside. In fact, Tommie told Betty that his father's ox-driver had had to stop his steers in the road in order to let John Reder pass, that the driver had told him "Good morn-ing," and had then hurried away in terror. It seemed that he would never be caught, though it was certain he was still in the neighborhood.

One day, about a month after the murder, Mrs. Pembroke set out for town with Gilbert, the colored coachman, driving the big family carriage,

and Betty and Tommie, chattering away, sat on the inside with her. She had always felt an especial tenderness for Tommie, her Brother Archie's son, ever since his mother died and left him a baby to her care; so he made The Oaks his stopping-place whenever he felt like it, and never missed an opportunity of going with her to town.

They stopped at the Cherry Hill post-office on their way that morning, and while Mrs. Pembroke talked to a neighbor, the children noticed one of the colored teamsters from the Flatwoods go by in a rickety wagon, carrying a large dry-goods box.

"Betty, did you see all those teenchy-weenchy little holes bored in that box?" Tommie asked. "I bet he is shipping a calf somewhere, 'cause the box is too big for a sheep or a pig."

"Well, I'll bet he ain't," answered Betty, ready for an argument: "I'll bet 'tis full o' lightwood he is sending somebody." This was quite probable, the Flatwoods being a lightwood stronghold.

"How you going to prove it?" Tommie retorted, bristling with the conviction that it could not be anything but a calf.

"Stop and ask him, of course," she answered, determined not to be outdone by his superior judgment.

Mrs. Pembroke, having at last finished her conversation, Gilbert whistled to his horses, and

when they next saw the wagon with the disputed box on board, it was climbing a hill in the Free Field, through which the main road passed. By this time four men on horseback had come out of the Flatwoods by way of cross-roads, and when the Pembroke carriage drew near the wagon all were traveling along within ear-shot of one another.

"Hello, Billie, what you got in that box?" Tommie called loudly to the colored teamster, whom he knew.

Billie had been driving since daybreak with a load on his mind as well as on his wagon. When Tommie spoke, he was so disconcerted that his first impulse was to throw down the lines and run for life; but, instead, he stammered, anxiously, "I don't know what I got in dar."

"Then we'll have to find out for you," said one of the horsemen, a great burly countryman with a gruff, determined voice.

Tommie and Betty were anxious to stay for the excitement, but Mrs. Pembroke made Gilbert hurry on. They had not gotten quite out of sight when Betty fairly screamed to Tommie, "They are pulling a *man* out o' the box, Tommie! See 'em! 'Tain't a calf nor lightwood neither!"

"I specs it's John Reder," said Gilbert, in his jimber-jawed way, whipping up his horses and hurrying to get out of reach of pistol shots. "I specs dee wus gwine ship *him* somewhar!"

And sure enough it was John Reder.

When, later in the day, Betty and Tommie stood in the doorway of one of the dry-goods stores of the town, watching and commenting upon all they saw, the four men passed with their prisoner.

"Tommie," Betty whispered, in a voice almost smothered with excitement, "it's one o' the men I saw in my dream! Grown folks think that children don' know anything, and they don' believe in dreams; but that surely is the tall, dark man with a scar on his forehead; and I'll believe till I die that a short, bald-headed, hook-nosed man with a stubby mustache helped do that murder."

The news of the capture of the murderer flew. He darkly threatened that he would make the county smoke when he got out of jail. Those in authority feared he could not be convicted by law, as, now that he was caught, the brother and sister would refuse to swear in court to the bloody clothes which they had so readily identified as his when they fancied he was safe, and other important facts would have to be thrown out as "hearsay" evidence. What was to be done? Could such a man be let loose to prey upon innocent humanity?

Then there was a dark night. Four hundred masked men rode into the town, the jail was broken open and the prisoner was hurried to a lonely tree on a near-by roadside; then there was

an order from the leader, "Hurry, men; the Guards are coming!"

"*We* are the *Home* guards," was the solemn answer.

The prisoner begged for a moment's respite; when it was granted, he said, "*Lennie* is innocent!" Justice, quick and fearful, was meted out. The subject was at first alluded to cautiously, then passed over, and finally handed down in the annals of county history as a knotty problem which had demanded unusual solution, like a "catch" in mathematics.

Betty held that there were two murderers on account of having dreamed about two, and because their faces had been so vividly distinct in that hideous nightmare; her Uncle Archie Terrell, Tommie's father, firmly believed that there were two because he thought the plan of the murder had been too clever for the stupid mind of John Reder, who had committed nothing but blunders in his attempts to make his escape. But John Reder alone paid the penalty, and he had declared with his dying breath that his brother Lennie was innocent.

Who could the "other man" have been, and what had become of him? This question haunted the community for years, then gradually public interest died away, and it was almost, but never quite, forgotten. The old Flatwoods fortune-teller, Ailsie Eddis, was strongly suspected of

knowing something about it, but she held her tongue, and there was no proof—only an unpleasant mystery for Betty, with her high-strung nature, to take into her after years, and for the people of the Cherry Hill neighborhood to talk over by their firesides, when they would shake their heads and wonder if time would ever reveal the identity of the wretched, dangerous criminal, who might, for all they knew, be right among them still.

CHAPTER III

FOR quite a while after her dream, and the subsequent blood-curdling developments, Betty had a chilly, creepy feeling such as she had only experienced twice before in her life. The first time she ever remembered being distinctly conscious of the peculiar sensation she was feeding the chickens down under the big oaks, when she was a tiny tot, and hearing a noise behind her, she thought it was a "bear" and in terror ran to the house.

The next time she did not know why she felt it. There had been an unusual outburst in her home, and she was vaguely aware that her father would possibly go away and might not come back. Indeed, she had an idea that her mother wanted him to go—that she was even insisting upon it. In her childish misery Betty cried, in a broken-hearted way, till she fell asleep in Aunt Lucy's arms. Her father represented to her at that time the person who always brought her striped stick candy and ginger cakes in paper bags from the cross-roads country store, which was also, unfortunately for him, a liquor shop, where he and several others like him quenched their thirst and discussed hard times and the political situation while their wives

were struggling at home to keep "buckle and tongue together." Thus beguiling the time, they loitered long hours on the store-house porch, propped back against the side of the house in split-bottomed chairs, discussing everything under the sun that was not their business. In truth, the candy and cakes were all she was ever to expect from such a father, Betty learned afterwards.

The occasion that had brought great pain to her in the anticipation of the loss of a parent that counted for so little brought a far greater sorrow to her mother. She had been tried to the limit of human endurance, she felt, and, crushed with almost overwhelming despair, she went over to consult her father about her troubles and to urge him to consent to a separation. The old gentleman, her brother Archie, and Tommie lived together.

"My child," he said, in answer to her pleadings, "try to bear with him. There has never been a divorce in our family, and you ought to avoid it for your baby's sake. Let him have a room at The Oaks; don't cast him off entirely. In the end it will be best."

The old gentleman was unspeakably distressed that his only daughter, whom he had loved and cherished and protected, had met with such a fate; but his interpretation of "for better, for worse" was far broader than her intelligence told her had ever been intended. But he belonged to the old school, to the time when a woman endured private

ignominy and disgrace and sacrificed her self-respect before she would seek relief by divorce. The very word had a terrible sound and meant gall and wormwood to the one so branded. Public opinion, that great controller of affairs, was distinctly against it; but the example of such instances as that which existed at The Oaks was working toward a change—human endurance and common sense would in time be obliged to rebel, and then the reaction would probably carry people far beyond the reasonable point in the other extreme.

Mrs. Pembroke returned home that day scarcely knowing what course to pursue; she did not want to go against her father's judgment, but she felt that his old-fashioned ideas demanded too much of her. A woman of sense and spirit, she was not one who would allow herself to be dragged down to the level of a weak, dissipated husband, and moreover, she shrank from bringing her child up in the unwholesome atmosphere of drunkenness and its attendant wreckage of a well-ordered home. She was broad-minded enough to regret her marriage for her husband's sake as well as for her own. She realized that perhaps some persuasive woman might have wielded a stronger influence over him. In the beginning she had made a splendid appeal to him to beware of the dangers and temptations which seemed to have for him a special attraction, and had he possessed a noble side it would not have been in vain. Now she

could only pray God to help him, and to change her feeling of disgust for his shortcomings to one of pity; but try as she might, it was difficult for her to see any extenuation for willful weakness and wrong-doing.

For Betty's sake as well as for her own she determined to take a positive stand. After that there were no more drunken outbursts at The Oaks. When Mr. Pembroke drank heavily he stayed away from home, so Betty was spared all personal knowledge of his dissipation.

In addition to the mystery of the "other man," from her childhood days Betty brought the distinct recollection of two other very different questions which puzzled her: Would she ever "fall in love"? and would she ever "get religion"? The rows of books on the long shelves in the splendid red library at The Oaks were so familiar to her that she felt almost a personal acquaintance with her favorite characters, and she had gathered many ideas about love from the novels of Scott, Dickens, and Maria Edgeworth. It was all very sweet, but to her very visionary. Her soul was full of romance, but she was not impressionable; if she were ever to have a "true love," it would just come of its own accord, and that was all there was about it. Books, however, had made one definite impression upon her; from them she had gleaned a clear-cut, lasting idea of what constituted a real gentleman. Her true love would have

to be a man of distinct refinement, high ideals, and strong character. "Getting religion," however, was a solemn, serious matter, and Aunt Lucy was responsible for the impression that it was an unmistakable sensation which had to be "'sperienced" by every sinner whose soul was to be saved. Betty, not being given to sensations, wondered about it as something vague, mysterious, incomprehensible, and—well, she hoped it would all come right in time.

The summer she was sixteen found her as pretty and attractive as even her mother's heart could wish. She was not only good to look upon, but she possessed that rarer and more lasting charm, a manner which was both winsome and bewitching—a manner born of a heart overflowing with charity and kindness and sympathy and good will toward all mankind. She played the piano so delightfully at the commencement exercises of the town school she attended as a boarder that the professor spoke of her as a young lady of wonderful talent and presented her with the music medal, a golden harp. Whenever she performed, the audience showered bouquet after bouquet upon her and the old school hall fairly shook with enthusiastic applause. Her playing was good, but her attractive appearance in a flowered pink organdie had much to do with the sending up by smiling ushers of the many bunches of roses that had been plucked from the gardens about. Aunt

Lucy, tall and thin, arrayed in one of Mrs. Pembroke's old black silk dresses, a broad lace bertha around her neck, sat in the gallery with the other colored people, fanning herself vigorously; and she and Charlotte were not less pleased with the flowers and presents which were showered upon Betty than were her father and mother and Uncle Archie.

Several young ladies sang, and Aunt Lucy remarked to one of her neighbors, in her usual positive, satisfied way: "I bound Miss Betty could sing better'n any of 'em, ef she jes' had a voice."

A big ball at The Oaks soon followed the closing of school, formally introducing Miss Betty Pembroke to the society of the county.

The whole place was ablaze with lights. Japanese lanterns hung on all the trees along the driveway from the outer gate up the ascent to the yard, where they branched out in every direction, transforming the lawn into a perfect fairy-land. The windows of the house were wide open, showing the brilliant illumination within, where softly shaded lamps and candles in big brass candlesticks and sconces and candelabra were generously distributed. Carriage after carriage drove up around the huge circle of roses and stopped at the front to let their occupants trip up the broad stone steps, pass the great white pillars to the wide portico and then disappear through the front door to the large square hall, where the floor was as

slippery as glass, ready for the dancing. The soft air wafted the fragrance of roses and honeysuckle within doors and without; sweet strains of music welcomed the guests, who came from every direction, and the portraits of ancestors, gazing down from broad gilt frames, seemed pleased by the revival of the old-time hospitality.

Mr. and Mrs. Pembroke and Major Archie Terrell received the guests and introduced them to Betty in the handsome old-fashioned parlor on the left of the wide hall, where the furniture, in its summer outfit of charming flowered chintz, looked as though it had freshly dressed for the occasion. One could not help noticing the hand-carved wainscoting, the tremendous height of the ceilings, the quaint old satin-striped wall-paper, and among the portraits a beautiful likeness of Mrs. Pembroke when she was a girl. In dignity and spaciousness the house reminded one of Jefferson's "Monticello," several miles away; indeed, from that gem of colonial architecture The Oaks had borrowed much of its style and refinement.

It was a striking family party that stood in the parlor at The Oaks that night. Mr. Pembroke, tall, dark, handsome, affable, good for nothing else, was just in his element on such an occasion. His courtly manners and gentlemanly bearing belied the fact that his had been an ill-spent life and that liquor had held him captive. As he mingled among his friends, many of whom he had not seen

for a long time, he was a strange contradiction of his usual self. Mrs. Pembroke was queenly in her appearance, but the friendliness of her manner was more attractive than the haughtiness we generally attribute to majesty, and her kindly brother, Major Terrell, was loved by everybody simply because they couldn't help it. There never had been any situation so distressing that it could not be alleviated by his kindly sympathy. He was Mrs. Pembroke's mainstay in everything, and now, particularly in arranging for the party and in conducting it; but his tact was such that he ever screened Mr. Pembroke's worthlessness. His hair was sandy, his eyes blue, and there was a look in his face that told that, while he was strong, he was also gentle, sweet-souled, and serene.

Tom Terrell—no longer Tommie—just back from his first year at the university, was there, too, pleased and proud in his dress suit, concerning the fit of which he had questioned Betty an irritating number of times, considering it was she and not he who was making a first formal bow to society. He stood behind her, "just to make a few remarks to keep her head from getting turned," he declared.

There might have been danger, indeed, of turning a head not quite so level, for, as Tom rightly conjectured, there were plenty of people to tell her about her charms, which were many. Her bright brown hair grew prettily around her fore-

head, and curled in big waves, among which a white rose nestled; her great violet eyes shone with ever-changing expression (which her Uncle Archie loved to watch), as she greeted first one person and then another with an adaptability that was innate and could never be acquired; her nose, straight, with fine nostrils, was pronouncedly high-bred; her well-shaped mouth was full enough to be exceptionally sweet and showed a set of handsome, even teeth when she laughed and talked, and the curve of her chin and throat would have aroused the enthusiasm of an artist. What struck people most, however, was her rich complexion, which would have made a plain face pretty. Her head was well set on fine shoulders, and her tall, active figure, combining the strength of a boy with the grace of a girl, was easy and natural in the soft white dress, which hung in long, loose folds.

Of all the young guests assembled at The Oaks that night, Betty decided there were only two whom she particularly liked. One was Bob Lewis, who had secretly considered her his sweetheart ever since the time they had been in the infant class together at the Cherry Hill Sunday-school, and he had ardently admired her buff-colored dress, little white shoes and socks, and her white hat that had a sky-blue ribbon on it. Bob was a typical country youth—green, good-natured, shy, and genuine.

He told Betty that night, when they were rest-

ing on the steps of the back porch after a dance, about a difficulty in which that same little hat of hers had once involved him.

"I was riding home from Sunday-school with mother one day when it was muddy," he said in his frank way, "and I was thinking of your pretty little hat, when mother asked one of the Flatwoods girls to get in the carriage and go part of the way with us. I looked at the child disappearing for a minute, and then I blurted out, 'That certainly is an ugly hat of yours!' 'I knows 'tis,' she answered, 'but pap's gwine git me another soon's ever he kin go ter town.' When we got home mother wore me out with a bunch of peach-tree switches for my gallantry, and I resented the punishment by telling her, 'You always keep tellin' me to tell the truth, and now I done tole it, and you're whippin' me for it.'"

Betty laughed, and just then some one came to claim a dance.

The other person she liked particularly was a delightfully pretty brunette, Alice Stephenson, who had come all the way from Brookwood, one of the remote plantations in the county, to attend the ball. Her effervescent gayety was as attractive to Betty in one way as Bob's blunt humor was in another; but girls never see much of each other at parties, and it was Tom Terrell, not Betty, who improved the opportunity of cultivating Alice's acquaintance that night.

The party was undoubtedly a success. Scarcely an invitation had been declined, and Betty's entrée into the social world was pronounced a most brilliant one. The young people danced to their hearts' content, they sat on the rustic benches beneath the oaks, and they strolled along the garden walks, until finally, at twelve o'clock, they went down the side hall to supper. In the opposite wing of the house from Mrs. Pembroke's room, which was used for the ladies' dressing-room, the supper was served.

Aside from her personal pride in Betty, Aunt Lucy's special delight that night was the great dining-room with its cream-colored walls, hung with handsome paintings by famous artists, and its shining mahogany table whereon were displayed, after their long rest in the big, richly carved chests, the family china and glass and silver. It was at this same oval table, upon which she had spent so much "elbow grease" in giving the finishing touches, that Tommie Terrell had refused to eat when he was a little fellow, saying he was "'fraid of it, 'cause it had crooked legs and big, shiny claws for feet." Then, too, Aunt Lucy knew she could make wonderful bread and more wonderful cake, and she liked to hear people speak of her as "that noted old cook."

The table was decorated with pink roses arranged in three large silver bowls, standing on magnificently embroidered center-pieces, and an

old-fashioned supper was served. There were raw tomatoes with mayonnaise dressing, ham sandwiches, chicken salad, pickles, hot coffee, and "almost anything you choose to call for, suh," as Aunt Lucy assured Bob, who seemed to her to be enjoying his supper in a way which showed genuine appreciation of her efforts.

Some time after supper, when the first guest made the move to depart, Major Terrell sought Mrs. Pembroke and said: "The Queen of Sheba is going and wants to bid you good night, Sophie." It was Mrs. Stephenson, the grandiloquent mistress of Brookwood, who was taking Alice off so early. Alice kissed Betty good-by—it was her impulsive way—and whispered, "I've had the best time at your party I've ever had in all my life!"

When the party broke up, and the company drove away, after all the compliments had been paid, many a one remarked that no doubt the next brilliant gathering at The Oaks would be when Betty married. So vague and shadowy and uncertain is the future—fortunately, so full of hope is the human heart!

Several horses shied that night at a figure hidden in the shadow of the trees—the figure of a man, haunting and haunted, drawn thither by a power which he would have given the world to be able to overcome; a man who hesitated between repentance for the past and renewal of crime—a

menace to the safety of any community. What did it mean? Who could it be? Was the finger of some strange, inexplicable fate pointing that somewhere, at some time, the haunting man would weave a thread that would alter the texture of Betty's destiny?

CHAPTER IV

AFTER the ball the beaux began to come from every direction. Aunt Lucy's heart swelled with pride when she told the servants of a less favored young lady, how horses always stood tied at her front gate, and how company was pouring in all the time: Miss Betty was soon recognized as the belle of the neighborhood. All the girls emulated her taste in dress, and when she set the fashion of wearing a dark green linen riding-habit, trimmed military fashion with white braid and buttons, completing the get-up with a jaunty white hat, every one of them came out soon after similarly attired in costumes of brown, blue, and plum-color.

She wrote a very stylish hand; and because Bob Lewis, who really was the most promising of the neighborhood beaux, received a note from her addressed in very black ink with a stub pen to "Robert O. Lewis, Esq.," which he showed with pride, all the notes which passed through the little Cherry Hill post-office afterwards bore stunning black "Esq.'s" instead of the old-fashioned "Mr.'s" which had been neatly penned in effeminate curves with pale ink by the belles of the preceding generation. The way Betty could swing a mallet made her the most sought after partner at

all the croquet tournaments, which were the fashion just then in the country around The Oaks. In fact, she seemed to have the happy faculty of doing everything well.

But the quiet social life in her neighborhood was but a tame affair compared to the opening of the University the next fall, when Tom Terrell went back to college and began to bring his friends out to The Oaks every Sunday to be introduced to his *débutante* cousin.

One day when she had received one of the new novels, a box of Huyler's candy, and a bunch of American Beauties (ordered from Washington, which, of course, enhanced their value), her mother remarked:

"How times have changed! When I was a girl, my friends used to send me music and copies of the works of their favorite poets. I don't believe young people read poetry much these days."

Betty made no reply.

Some days later she was made to return a tempting gold-headed crop and a lovely pearl horse-shoe pin which had been sent to her.

"But, mamma," she protested, "all the girls do these things nowadays, and why shouldn't I?"

"Customs change, I know, Betty, and I believe to a certain extent in keeping up with the times, as you call it; but there are some things which high-bred women never do at any time. I don't want you to cheapen yourself by accepting all

kinds of presents from your friends. While I heartily approve of a straightforward, sincere friendship between a man and a woman, I do not want you to accept presents, nor do I wish your photograph to be in the possession of any man, unless you are engaged to him.

"When a woman throws away the little refinements which lift her above the ordinary run of people, she loses her greatest charm, and destroys the elevating influence which might be hers. You are young now, but the time will come when you will realize the full force of what I am saying, and you will be glad that I prevented you from doing the things which many women have in their heart of hearts regretted. Remember, that the better looking and the more attractive a woman is, the greater is her power for good or bad; no one ever lives higher than she aims. So, make for yourself a standard you can never be ashamed of, and fearlessly live up to it."

Betty watched the beautiful expression of her mother's face as she spoke, and she felt that that mother's life was a standard upon which she could not improve. She realized that it had not been happy, according to human measurements of happiness, but that her brave spirit had overcome all trials.

On the handsome face of the older woman there was a look of serenity which belongs to those who have struggled and have conquered.

She was tall, and her large figure was admirably proportioned. Her rich brown hair barely escaped being auburn, and, if there were any gray threads in it, they were not noticeable; her blue eyes were wonderfully soft and sincere, and the few indistinct lines which had gathered around them added to, rather than detracted from, the charm of the face; her mouth was strong and expressive, and on her face was still the bloom of good health. But to Betty her mother's prettiest points were the shape of her head, and the waving of her hair above her ears and around her neck.

As she grew older Betty began to realize that her father's weakness, which she and her mother never discussed, had been more than compensated for by her mother's strength. She sometimes wondered vaguely whether it took sorrow to make people as nearly perfect as were her mother and her Uncle Archie.

She knew that there had been many disappointments in her mother's life, and she knew, also, that the death of the young wife, whom he loved devotedly, had cast a lasting shadow upon her Uncle Archie's happiness; but they had, nevertheless, remained true to their highest ideals, and her faith in them was unbounded. To them she owed all that she was.

She had been taught that she had come from a race of people who, realizing their obligation to those less favored, had used their wealth and

social position only for the betterment of conditions around them. The Terrells had never been idlers; on the contrary, they had ever given the example of industry and capability. As time drifted on her discernment of life and its great meaning gradually awakened and developed.

During the first winter of her young ladyhood, which was the gayest she had ever known, she thought a great deal about that problem of "falling in love," which had long been on her mind. "What does it mean, and will I ever know?" she asked herself often, when the time was slipping by, and she realized that she did not care for any single person to the exclusion of the others, as far as she could judge herself.

"Dee is a likely lot of young gent'mans dat comes out here," Aunt Lucy declared one day; "an' you cyarn' go fur wrong to take arry one of 'em dat axes you, an' wid all dis cookin' dat I been doin'—well, 'tain' wuth while ter 'spress no 'pinion, but I gwine jes' wait an' see."

When spring came, Betty was invited to spend the Easter holidays at the University.

The Saturday before Easter the Pembroke carriage made its appearance before the University post-office, where were gathered a number of students. Gilbert, apparently, was paying strict attention to his roans, but all the while he was acutely conscious of the fact that Betty, becomingly attired in dark blue that contrasted well

with the drab cushions of the carriage, was attracting much attention.

Tom Terrell, who was on the lookout for them, came to meet them, and got into the carriage with Betty, directing their route through the street leading to the University.

The spirit of the holiday was everywhere in evidence. Alice Stephenson, driving with a student, stopped a moment to speak to Betty.

"I'm so glad you've come at last," was her cordial greeting; "we've been hoping every day for the last week that you would come. I am going to run over to see you often. I am just across the lawn from you—at Mrs. Bell's. You will be with Mrs. Lucas, won't you?"

"Yes—do come soon," Betty urged with animation, readily entering into the scheme of companionship. "Perhaps we can arrange to have some fun together."

"She's a great Alice," Tom said, when she drove past. "She's full of life and go, and that will suit you; but you'd better not try to keep up with her pace, unless you want to shock Aunt Sophie."

Then they entered the University grounds, which the first days of early spring had touched with perfume and blossom, passed West Range, then, turning toward an old-fashioned garden where the jonquils were just in bloom, followed intricate ways that led into a road running by

the side of a serpentine brick wall, and finally pulled up behind the residence of one of the faculty. They got out, went up the steps to the lawn, and Tom rang the professor's doorbell.

The venerable old house, with its huge white columns, fronted the broad expanse of green, where the trees were just bursting into bud; up and down the Arcades rang the brisk footsteps of passersby, while the Rotunda, quiet, calm, peaceful, stood like a superb mother overlooking her children. Neither Tom nor Betty, however, gave a thought to the master-mind that had selected this spot, unparalleled in beauty, as a site for the seat of learning of the commonwealth, had planned it all, had carefully developed it, and had left it as a parting gift to the people, in whose interest that mind had already bequeathed its best—no mean legacy, for the founder of the University of Virginia was also the author of the Declaration of Independence. Their minds were too occupied with plans for ball games, germans, buggy-rides, and such glorious things as belong to the heyday of youth to think of the great master of "Monticello," sleeping peacefully on the mountainside over there.

Betty was graciously welcomed by Mrs. Lucas, and taken upstairs to a roomy bedroom—a typical Colonial room with its old-fashioned mahogany furniture, its fine "four-poster" with flowered tester and valance, and its two wide win-

dows opening out upon the lawn. It was already late and nearly supper-time, and, as Mrs. Lucas had invited some of the students to meet her, Betty hurriedly unpacked her basket-trunk, and put on a lighter dress for the evening.

That night, when she went up to bed, she did not take long to select the four names for her bedposts—the only difficulty was that there were too many, instead of too few, from whom to choose. Of the many students who had been constant guests at her home she decided upon Billy Harrison first, because he had that evening sent her a tremendous bunch of violets which she could wear to church the next day, when he was to be her escort, and because Aunt Lucy always sounded his praises so vigorously that he was an ever-present topic at The Oaks.

“He’s sech a histercrat,” she had said, “an’ he do wear sech pretty shoes. Las’ time he come out ter stay he brought so many pyars dat Gilbert called me up to de room ter look at ’em. Dyar was tan shoes, brown shoes, patent-leathers, lace-shoes, an’ button-shoes.”

The next post at the foot of the bed she named Jack Allen, because she herself was partial to Jack: he could make his violin sing delightfully pathetic melodies, his blue ribbon badge proclaimed that he was an Eli Banana, and his queer dark ring whispered that he was a Zeta. Then, there was Charley Shirley, the best-looking stu-

dent in college, for the third post, and the fourth was begrudgingly given to the customary "Unknown."

"How can I fall in love with one when there are so many to think about?" Betty asked herself, and then she went to sleep, with Aunt Lucy's ready answer, "De's' wait tell Mr. Right come erlong—den you'll know," all mixed up in her mind with drowsy thoughts about her Easter dresses, two of which were really and truly "all silk."

The next morning when she awoke the Easter sunshine was peeping into her room through the cracks of the green shutters, and the first thing she saw was the post she had named Jack Allen. So, superstitiously speaking, her fate was sealed.

When Billy Harrison came to walk over with her to the chapel, he was carefully groomed, and his shoes were brand-new, pointed-toed, patent-leathers with big buttons—the very acme of the style. When he walked into the chapel with Betty, in her apple green silk and the American Beauties on her dainty little leghorn hat nodding approvingly to the violets pinned in among the lace on the front of her dress, there was a flutter of wonder among the students she hadn't met, and among the girls—the home girls and the visiting girls—who would have to divide honors with her. The students, sitting far back in chapel so that they could talk, or slip out if the sermon proved

wearisome, pronounced her a "beauty," a "queen."

After church everybody took a walk. Later, when Betty went to her room to brush up for two o'clock dinner, the little Lucas girls, ten and eight years old, were holding a conversation on the porch by her window. The sash was up, but the shutters were closed. They were discussing their Cousin Emily's wedding, which was soon to take place, and the dresses they were to wear as flower-girls. Faustina was talking about it in a dreamy, sentimental tone.

"I don't see what Cousin Emily's gettin' a dull old crêpe de chine for," she said in her drawling way; "when I get married I'm goin' to wear a white satin dress with a long train to it, an' I'm goin' up the aisle to the tune of 'Onward, Christian Soldiers, Marchin' as to War.'"

"Well, 'deed I ain't," objected Ursula, the younger, in her coquettish little way, tossing her black curls and rolling her dark eyes; "*I'm* goin' wear a red satin dress with a black plume in my hair, an' I'm goin' up the aisle to 'Hot Time in the Old Town To-night.'"

At dinner, where there was a large crowd of grown-ups, Betty told in her inimitable way what they had said. Her vivacity and her keen sense of humor made her the center of attraction to a set of students who were not partial to the flirtatious type. In character she was as honest as the

days are long, and her quickness of perception, her ability to make a good story out of any little incident, gave her a roguish charm that was irresistible.

That afternoon and evening the Lucas doorbell rang almost unceasingly. Alice ran in for a few minutes before it was time for student callers.

"I've the best joke to tell you," she began, taking Betty over to the parlor window where they could watch the students pass as they talked. "I'm so bubbling over with mischief that I'm always doing something very wicked, you know, so don't be shocked. I've been here since Tuesday, and Ben Holland, from one of those little towns down in Virginia somewhere, has been giving me a great rush. One of his old sweethearts is here, too, and naturally expected Ben to do something toward making her have a good time. Every time she has seen him with me she has been downright foolish, so I made up my mind to get even with her for her pointed remarks about me. Yesterday, Ben sent me a gorgeous bunch of flowers to wear to church to-day—fortunately, Tom sent me flowers, too, so I really wasn't depriving myself by my mischievous plan."

Betty made a mental note that Tom thought enough of the young lady to send her flowers, even if he had suggested that she herself would do well not always to follow her lead. "Such is human consistency!" she thought.

"I fixed up Ben's flowers," Alice continued, in her vivacious way, "put his card back in the box, wrote the other girl's name on the wrapping-paper, and told the maid at Mrs. Bell's that the box had been sent to me by mistake."

"You don't mean it?" Betty laughed—Alice was possessed of the kind of audacity that provokes mirth, and not reproach. It was her manner of doing things that redeemed her.

"Yes, I do," she answered, "and it was too funny when he called last night. I could feel that, naturally, he expected me to thank him, and I was like the tar-baby—'I ain' say nothin'.' To-day he got the sweetest kind of a note from the girl, and then he came to me in a rage. When he and I walked out of church—I was wearing Tom's flowers, which I had seen him notice in a questioning way—we met her with his flowers on. I wish you could have seen them! I wouldn't have taken anything for it. She gave him the most killing smile, and he looked as though he could bite a ten-penny nail in two. The whole thing was too ridiculous, but finally I had to own up to him, because he threatened a row with the florist for making the mistake."

"Do you always do reckless things?" Betty asked wonderingly.

"Yes, whenever I please. When I am out in the country, sometimes it seems to me I almost die for the want of some fun. Don't you feel

sometimes that you just *must* do something to get up a little excitement?"

"Often," Betty owned up. "But whenever I want to get into anything really mischievous, I can always feel something holding me back. Then I get on my horse and gallop for dear life—that always helps my feelings when I am lonely."

"I do just as I please," Alice answered independently. "I don't care a rap what anybody thinks or says, do you?"

"Yes—I care what mother and Uncle Archie think about me. I don't believe I care what anybody else thinks. But they are so splendid—not the least bit the goody-good kind. They have lots of sense, and they always think about giving me all the pleasure they can, so when *they* disapprove I stop."

"Well, with me it's different," Alice went on confidentially. "Mother—Mrs. Stephenson, you know—doesn't really seem to think anything is wrong as long as I have lots of attention, and can amuse her with my nonsense—she likes display and show above everything. I reckon she was a bird in her day. They tell me she was engaged to ten men the night she married Mr. Stephenson. I expect she married him for Brookwood and his money. Some people do say that she was in love with a student from way down South when she was a girl, and that she kept hoping he would come back, and that the very day she was married she

kept looking down the road for him. But he didn't like her way of being engaged to so many at once, and he never came.

"Mrs. Bell, who is her cousin, is just the opposite. She thinks *everything* is wrong. She disapproves of buggy-riding, she thinks playing cards is wicked, and she won't let a card come into her house; she can't understand why decent people should let their children dance, and by the time she cuts out all the things she disapproves of there is nothing left to do. I know everything isn't right, and I also know everything isn't wrong, but I really don't know which is which when it comes to the conventionalities, so I do as I please, and have a grand time."

Betty thought it queer that Alice should speak as she did of Mrs. Stephenson and Mrs. Bell—then she remembered that she was adopted, and no blood kin.

"I see Charley Shirley making his way over here, so good-by for the present," was Alice's excuse for leaving, when she saw several callers standing at Mrs. Bell's door across the lawn. Betty followed her out, and met Mr. Shirley.

When the last caller had gone that night, Betty counted over the number of visitors she had had during the afternoon and evening. "Twenty-eight, counting Tom," she reflected. "That's doing pretty well for this day and time. They say before ball games became the rage, and when

'calico' was in vogue, it was nothing unusual for a girl to have as many as fifty callers in one evening; but times have changed, and I'm content."

By Monday afternoon it had blown up cold, and the crowd of people shivered as they watched the game between Yale and the home team. Orange and blue ribbons flaunted themselves valiantly from Jack Allen's whip, as he and Betty sat in a buggy drawn by a pair of natty blacks. Betty looked like a picture in her blue suit; she had pinned an orange-colored flower on her hat, and she held an orange and blue flag, a tiny affair, in honor of the occasion. Tom was manager of the home team, and this increased her interest. Jack had plenty of dash, and prided himself on doing things up in style—his father had plenty of money. The college spirit vented itself in violent cheering when the home team did well, but Betty thought the tremendous hush that followed the good playing of the visitors was rather impolite. She had the true spirit of the sportswoman, and was keen over any fine achievement.

When she reached home, thoroughly chilled, she found a royal fire on her bedroom hearth, and on the windowsill was another large box of flowers. She opened it eagerly, took out the card that read "Mr. Charles Shirley, Jr.," and put the splendid La France roses outside the window to keep fresh for the german that night.

Her heart gave a throb of joy. It was her first german, and the flowers would be lovely with the fluffy pink dress she had chosen to wear. Somehow, Charley Shirley appealed to her fancy more than any of the others: he had a way of taking hold of things that always made them go and insured a good time. She was glad she had him to depend upon for her first german, concerning which she felt some uncertainty. People told her it was such an awful feeling to get left when all the others were dancing. Some even said that germans had been the cause of broken hearts—at any rate, she was sure she didn't want to be a wall-flower.

"You are simply *stunning*," was Charley's enthusiastic greeting, when he came to take her over to the gymnasium, where the germans were held, "and I've got a whole bunch of fellows over there crazy to dance with you. Don't be a bit uneasy. I shan't leave you for a moment, and the german figures are the simplest things in the world to follow."

Betty met Alice in the dressing-room, and felt at ease at once.

"Our seats are opposite," Alice assured her, "so that our partners can take us out. It's a fine scheme—always well to pull in pairs at a german."

Betty was a bit shy when she spoke to all the chaperones, and ran the gauntlet of their eyes and

subsequent remarks, but Charley moved on quickly to where he had claimed their seats. His air of confidence reassured her, and, then, he had a delightful way of introducing people to her, as if he thought they ought to feel it a proud day in their lives when they could meet her. No wonder that, before the dance was over, she doubted whether there could be anything else in this world quite as delightful as a University of Virginia german.

That night, against the railing of the gallery above the ballroom, leaned a non-dancing student who was dazzled by her beauty. He had come over with the intention of staying a few moments. He was at the University to study, not to frolic, and he didn't approve of "round" dancing. He was in a gloomy mood when he came to look on. It seemed to him that others were getting all the bright things out of life—that for him there was only somber seriousness. Then he saw Charley Shirley's pink vision of a partner, and he lost his head as he watched her—he wasn't quite sure that he had a heart or even a soul. He was a tall, handsome youth—the kind of whom one expects much in later life. He lingered till the german was over, and the next night found him again in the same place.

He looked over all the couples as they came in. The pink lady was either late or he was over-early. At last she came, and this time she was with Jack

Allen, his own closest friend. She was not in pink, but was wearing a creamy dress with a flowing train, and she was carrying a bunch of magnificent red roses. Rochambeau Rose had never envied Jack Allen anything before, but now he felt that he would give a great deal to be entering that room with that girl's light touch on his arm. His eyes followed her, and never left her while she and Jack led figure after figure—when she waltzed, when she two-stepped, when she seemed to quicken her pace, as if aroused when the band struck up "Eli Banana, Starry Banner," and, at last, when Jack claimed his half of "Home, Sweet Home," and she glided away with him.

Then Rochambeau looked at his watch and found that he had not stopped looking at that one visiting girl for at least four hours. He drew himself together with a shiver—what did it all mean? Why didn't he take his place among the dancers, among those who were getting their share of the glad things of youth?

At the Beta german the next night he watched her again, and she seemed to him less brilliant, but far sweeter, than before. She wore a dress he simply adored. It was a soft white silk, covered with dainty bunches of violets tied together with tiny green ribbons, and between her shoulders was a violet-colored bow from which hung long streamers that Tom Terrell held on to whenever he marched behind her. Rochambeau, not know-

ing they were cousins, wondered at his impudence. She carried violets, and every now and then he saw her bury her face in them as if she loved them as dearly as he did. Then Rochambeau tore himself away from the dance, told himself he was a fool, that he might lose his degree by idling away his time watching a girl whom in all probability he never would see again. He went to his room more bitter than ever, and paid the penalty of not being like other young men, who were alive with their youth, not moping over the troubles of the future.

His room was No. 13 West Range, where Edgar Allan Poe had spent his college days, and Rochambeau had a large picture of the poet over his mantel. Poe was his favorite author. His tales and poems, neatly bound, lay on Rochambeau's table, and showed signs of such constant perusal that the volumes opened naturally at "The Raven" and "The Gold-bug." On the flyleaf of both books Rochambeau had written: "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country." The influence of the poet took possession of him whenever he entered the room, and there was a melancholy associated with the memory of Poe that was peculiarly in accord with his own feelings. Rochambeau loved to brood—he doted on it, reveled in it, and it was already beginning to make inroads upon his character as any other evil habit will do.

A member of a large family, he had been brought up in a remote place in the country, and the time was now drawing near when he would have his own way to make in the world. Already he had secured a position as a teacher for the coming session. He would enter the world of work with no other equipment than his education and a strong sense of rectitude; he had no tact, no knowledge of human nature, for he never had had the opportunity to mingle with his fellowmen enough to enable them to understand and appreciate the best side of his character. And it was he, of all that body of students, who was to mean more to Betty in the future than any of the others, although that Easter she had never met him, never even heard his name.

The finals followed close on the heels of Easter, and it was Tom Terrell's last year at college. Betty's friends were all his contemporaries, and when she went in to see them graduate in June, to dance the morning german with Jack Allen and the T. I. L. K. A. with Charley Shirley, she felt that they were all about to pass out of her life, and that she could never take the same interest in the University again. Her heart was sad when she and Tom drove out home together. Rochambeau caught a parting glimpse of her as he stood in the post-office door with his diploma in his hand the morning she left.

"It's all over, and they are all gone," she told

Aunt Lucy, in answer to her questions about them when she returned to The Oaks.

"But, honey, ain't you gwine let one of 'em come back arfter you some o' dese days?"

"I don't know how to fall in love, Aunt Lucy," she said. "They are gone for good. Even Tom is going way down South to-morrow, and is going in a law office. So there! I'm dead tired, and must go to sleep."

"She sut'ny is one cuyous child," Aunt Lucy meditated, and it seemed to her that June day that the stillness at The Oaks was oppressive—nothing to look forward to, no wedding to help plan.

Betty thought it was a pity that both Jack and Charley had seen fit to take her out driving in order to propose to her. It would have been so much pleasanter to have had a friendly excuse to keep up with them, and have them come back occasionally. They had both told her of their great love for her in the ardent way of the men of the South, and their intense expression of affection seemed to her strangely serious and solemn, and out of all proportion to the calm friendliness of her feeling for them. She wondered at herself, at her coldness of heart, at her lack of sentiment. She would miss them terribly—but marry either of them?—never! It was sad to think that there was not one among them who was indispensable to her happiness. She shrank from a

loveless life. She felt she would be thankful to fall in love even if it brought her disappointment—she would at least feel she was not different from other people. She would be glad to know that somebody could arouse her sleeping heart.

CHAPTER V

THE second summer that Betty was a "young lady" was spent in the Cherry Hill neighborhood, where she was surrounded by country people born and bred. She was as yet untrained in the ways of the world. Fortunately for her, however, a great change was beginning to take place in the sleepy community that had just passed through the stagnation of poverty and depression brought on by the war and increased by Reconstruction. She had been born too late to know anything of the charming ante-bellum days, and she had accepted her surroundings as a matter of course because she had never known anything else. Her poor father's dissipated tendencies had made it necessary for her grandfather—who had died while she was still a very small child—to leave her mother's share of his depleted estate to her in trust, and her Uncle Archie always had had the management of their affairs—and her Uncle Archie she adored.

Now, a change was coming; new people were beginning to arrive on the scene, to buy up the beautiful old dilapidated homes, and to bring back a breath of the fresh air of prosperity. This change was felt tremendously. Some deplored it from a sentimental standpoint, but the majority

welcomed the return of active, vigorous life. The politics of the State were at last in a hopeful condition, and the capitalists were willing to invest their money in a land where Nature was wreathed in smiles. So in they came from North, South, East, and West.

Major Terrell sold for a goodly sum one of Mrs. Pembroke's estates that lay at quite a distance from The Oaks, and for the first time in her life Betty was conscious of something like financial ease.

The old saying that it never rains, but it pours, was true of the coming in of strangers, and one of the many changes brought to Betty a very congenial neighbor in Alice Stephenson. For some unknown reason Mrs. Stephenson decided to sell magnificent Brookwood to some strangers named Harvey, who had been spending many years traveling abroad, and who now wanted a desirable place in which to settle down. Mrs. Stephenson claimed that they offered her such a goodly price that she could not afford to refuse it, but the people who knew of her ample means were disposed to believe that some other reason had induced her to take such a decided step.

At any rate, the sale was made, and the Stephensons moved to Sweetbriar, which was very near The Oaks. Betty remembered having passed Brookwood once when she was a little girl, and she remembered wondering what Alice was like

when she saw her at a great distance over in the yard, waving the skirt of her white dress at a gorgeous peacock. Later, she had met Alice in one of the stores of the town, which was the one place where the people from the different parts of the county were in the habit of meeting occasionally, and she and Alice had struck up an acquaintance. She remembered that meeting vividly, as Alice was not a person to be forgotten. She was very dark, a vivid, joyous beauty, and her vivacious ways had touched a sympathetic chord in Betty's fervent heart.

"I wonder how far your house is from mine," Alice had said energetically, voicing the hope that they might see each other again, while Betty took in the tight-fitting red Jersey waist she wore, the full, thin white skirt with broad tucks, and the straw hat, the crown and brim of which vied with each other in size. But they didn't meet again for a long time—not till Alice came over to Betty's party.

In view of the recent pleasant renewal of their acquaintance at the University, when Major Terrell told Betty that Brookwood had been sold and that the Stephensons were coming to Sweetbriar to live, she was naturally delighted. That first meeting came back to her in a flash—that "I wonder how far your house is from mine," with Alice's breezy friendliness and her funny old-fashioned clothes. Then Betty thought of her own costume

on that occasion—of her high-crowned, brimless hat with the bank of pink roses piled in front, of her white dress with tightest of tight-fitting sleeves—and she laughed at the thought of how ludicrous the pair would look in the light of recent dictates of fashion had they been photographed on that occasion.

Miss Alice Stephenson soon became a dashing addition to the Cherry Hill neighborhood, and the long cottage at Sweetbriar, remodeled and refurnished, was quite in harmony with its charming name.

The beaux of the neighborhood were at a low ebb. Tom Terrell had gone to seek fame and fortune by the rather doubtful road of the legal profession, and the new people who had come in were as yet scarcely sufficiently acclimated to be considered anything more than acquaintances. In fact, Betty's standby was the only eligible around.

Bob Lewis had proved most constant, most devoted, from the day after her party, when he first shyly joined her as she was riding home from her Uncle Archie's; but Bob was only big and good-natured, with great broad shoulders—altogether too angular, though his blue eyes were honest, and his kind face was handsome in an irregular sort of way. He was not the style to win Betty, even if the opportunity of seeing something of the world had not come her way.

A teacher of vocal music came to the neighbor-

hood for the summer, for the charms of the community had spread abroad, and the "Widder Barnes" had advertised for boarders. After a few lessons it was discovered, to the delight of others as well as Aunt Lucy, that Betty really had a voice. In fact, it was so promising that when her cousin John Pembroke, of New York, wrote for her to come and spend the winter with him and his mother, she gladly accepted the invitation with a view to having it cultivated, feeling that such a chance was not to be neglected.

Her Cousin John's father, her father's eldest brother, had married into one of the wealthiest and most prominent families of the great city, and her Aunt Margaret had always been one of the favorite "in-laws" of the Pembroke connection. She was now a widow, and her only son was getting to be quite an old bachelor. They were lonely, they said, and a young girl in the house would cheer them up. So it was decided that Betty should go.

The most important question, of course, was a suitable outfit. Charlotte had become quite a seamstress, and she, Mrs. Pembroke, and Betty were soon eagerly engaged in the fascinating work. A careful examination of the treasures stored away in the great lavender-scented cedar chests in the attic had revealed a bewildering array of finery, for Mrs. Pembroke had been one of the best-dressed girls in the county in her day. Then

the next thing was to study over the dazzling colored prints in the New York fashion books, and select the most attractive designs. So every morning their busy fingers flew in the sewing-room at The Oaks, with really astonishing results, and every afternoon Betty rode horseback with Alice and Bob, who hated to think of losing her for the winter—perhaps for good and all—who could tell? It was considered a significant fact by the Cherry Hill people that Major Terrell had scarcely given Betty a perfect specimen of thoroughbred horseflesh, named "Bird," before Bob broke a wonderful colt that he named "Bird-catcher," ostensibly because he could trace his pedigree back to the famous Irish "Birdcatcher."

At the thought of going to New York Betty's heart was full of youthful enthusiasm, which, after all, is like a candle—at best it burns but a short while, then flickers and goes out; but, if we keep ourselves at peace with the best that is in us, the years bring a deeper, purer, broader happiness, more satisfying to the soul than this light gladness, as the rich, full, glorious voice of the wholesome Schumann-Heink is more fraught with noble inspiration than the gay notes of the light soprano however gifted.

The time for Betty's departure soon came. The day she left, Alice rode over in the afternoon to the country post-office that lay between Sweetbriar and her old home, Brookwood, where they

still got their mail. As she rode up to the porch, where the usual crowd of country people had collected, there came up from the opposite direction a stranger whose appointments proclaimed him an up-to-date horseman.

"Here's your mail," said the gentlemanly old postmaster, handing it to her and speaking to attract her attention, which was turned unmistakably toward the stranger. Then he went to the other side of the steps to speak to the tall, broad-shouldered, blond young man, who had dismounted. "Good evening, Mr. Harvey," he said cordially, as if addressing an old friend; "let me introduce you to Miss Alice Stephenson."

"So he's the son of the people who bought Brookwood," was her excited thought. She bowed graciously, with a charming, "I am glad to meet you, Mr. Harvey," as the courteous stranger lifted his hat coldly, afraid that she might not care to acknowledge such an introduction. "I should feel indignant with you for daring to own Brookwood," she continued audaciously, "if I didn't infinitely prefer being at Sweetbriar."

It was a gorgeous October afternoon, the air was delightfully frosty, the country magnificent in its gorgeous autumn dress. "I am sure you can't begrudge me the privilege of enjoying some of this," Henry Harvey answered genially, waving his hand toward the glowing mountains. Her manner had made him feel "acquainted."

"You're welcome to Brookwood and to the community," she had the grace to say. "Mother and I hope to call on your mother soon. Come over to Sweetbriar whenever you feel like it; we can be friendly, even if you have got my home." She had turned her horse's head homeward, and looked back at Henry as she spoke.

Before he could answer she had put her mail in a little leather wallet, had touched her horse's flank with her crop, saying, "Get up, Ben Bolt!" and was cantering away.

"Sweet Alice and Ben Bolt—what a charming combination!" Henry said to himself, as the great gray horse bore his graceful burden out of sight at a point in the road where a sugar maple was just beginning to drop some of its golden leaves on the damp red earth. A gray riding-habit, a bright red tie, a bewitching dark face—his train of thought was uninterrupted till he reached home.

"This seems a land fit for romance and chivalry," he declared heartily, as he handed his father and mother their mail. They were sitting by an open fire in the library, toasting their gouty feet. It was a fine old room, heavily wainscoted in dark oak, with immense windows looking out toward the Blue Ridge. Mrs. Harvey, born and reared in the North, never tired of talking about the attractions of the new home. She looked over her letters, and then, lured by Henry's enthusiastic

remark about the country, she began to tell him some of the bits of information she had that afternoon gleaned from a caller concerning the history of Brookwood.

"The Stephensons were an aristocratic family. The old gentleman was an Englishman of distinguished birth, and when he died he left a large fortune, which was invested in England, to his wife and son. The son married a great belle and beauty, and before the war they entertained regally. Many noted people have been guests here. Handsome men and beautiful women trod these floors, and noble hearts plighted their troth here. If walls could speak, this grand old house could tell many a story of love and war, of Southern belles and their soldier beaux, of war-time frolics, of refugees, and of troops coming through with commotion in their wake."

"I met the daughter of the house at the post-office this afternoon," Henry remarked, as casually as the recollection of the startlingly attractive young lady would permit.

"Adopted daughter," Mrs. Harvey corrected. "Nobody knows who she is."

"Adopted?—the mischief!" thought Henry, turning to his newspaper to hide his surprise.

There was something in his manner that gave his mother to understand that he did not care to continue the conversation just then.

CHAPTER VI

BETTY's mother had written to John Pembroke asking him to meet her at Jersey City, as her train would arrive late. He stood eagerly watching every lady who passed, but he did not recognize his young cousin when she went by.

"That must be Cousin John," she said to herself; "but I'll just stand here a minute and let him come and speak to me first—then I shall be sure I have made no mistake."

But her Cousin John did not budge.

She looked at him still more closely. He was tall and thin and dark, with bright and penetrating eyes, and a strong, firm mouth; his clothes hung upon him loosely—he looked more the savant than the swell. She had seen him once when she was a little girl, and a recent photograph made her satisfied beyond a doubt that it was he; so she walked up to him and said, not shyly nor demurely, but with certainty ringing in her voice:

"Is this Cousin John?"

"Why, my dear child, to be sure it is. I am glad to see you. I have been standing here watching for a little green country girl, with brown hair and violet eyes. I was expecting to see her wearing a brown ulster, and a red hood was to be on her head—that is what your mother wrote me.

I was not prepared to see a grand, tall, stylish, independent young lady, who seemed to know perfectly well what she was about."

"She wrote that I would wear a brown ulster with a red hood, and so I do—but she didn't mean that I would wear a red hood on my head, goose!" and she laughed a refreshingly natural, hearty laugh at the very thought of such a thing.

"Oh, I see," he said, scrutinizing the garment quizzically, "the hood is attached to the back of the ulster—sort of a domino affair. But how did you know me?"

"Because you wrote that if I saw a man who exactly fitted the description of Ichabod Crane, it would be you!" she answered, with a twinkle in her eye which settled it with him that he had made no mistake in asking her to spend the winter with them, and in undertaking to show her some of the gayety of the metropolis.

When they crossed the ferry, Betty's admiration of the brilliant illumination of the city was so great that she did not pretend to hide it, and her Cousin John further congratulated himself that she was as naïve as she was pretty and charming.

Occupied with conversation with him, she paid no particular attention to the shabby man who sat on her right, or to the shabby old newspaper which he coned earnestly with the aid of the uncertain light; but her eyes caught, and saved for future reference, the name of the paper, *The*

Daily Budget, also the word "Kentucky," and the headlines to several columns in startling letters—"Redwood," "Panic in Town," "Shock to Community"—she remembered afterward that the paper was several years old. All this her eyes saw, but her mind, apparently, did not take in; meanwhile, the ferry-boat was fast approaching the great city of New York.

Her Cousin John, talking along in a general way, made some remark about her locality in Virginia, which startled the shabby man out of all thought of his paper. As he turned the light fell full upon him, and Betty recognized the wretched, depraved face of the other murderer she had dreamed about long ago! She suppressed a frightened scream. The man slunk away to a distant seat, and sat with his head hanging down like a drunken man—not drunk indeed with liquor, nor yet with sleep, but with sin.

Betty could not explain it all to her Cousin John—it was too vague. He would think her erratic to fancy she could remember a face seen only in a dream so long ago, and she did not want to forfeit his good opinion right in the beginning. She did not know what to do. She puzzled over it all, but said nothing about it, and gradually the sights she was seeing for the first time overshadowed in a measure the peculiar occurrence, which, however, had made a lasting impression.

When she arrived at her Cousin John's home, he

and her Aunt Margaret, tall, gracious, magnificent, took her over to The Savoy for dinner, for it was late, and town servants were not like Aunt Lucy, ever ready and willing to be obliging, on time and out of time.

Betty listened to the music, wondered at the palms, and admired her Aunt Margaret's white hair and beautiful soft, dark eyes, as she ate her blue points and artichokes. She forgot the fatigue of the journey, and even the ferry-boat incident, as she listened to her Cousin John, while he told anecdote after anecdote about the time he visited The Oaks when a small boy—how he killed all the young ducks, telling, with pride, after the harm was done, "that he killed every little yallow bird he saw."

That night Betty wrote her mother:

"MY DEAR, DARLING MAMMA:

"I arrived safe, and found Cousin John waiting for me at Jersey City. He and Aunt Margaret are lovely, and I am sure now that I shall enjoy this visit immensely. I know I am as green as a gourd vine, and that you have misgivings about me, but don't be worried—Cousin John says I am 'all right.'

"Devotedly,
"BETTY."

Betty was highstrung and perhaps a little nervous over the excitement of city noises, and over

her recent experience with the awful "dream man"—at any rate her first night in the magnificent bedroom at her Aunt Margaret's was not the most comfortable she had ever spent. There were two elegant nuisances which between them robbed her of rest.

It was a cold night, and every time she fell asleep the satin-down quilt would slip off, no matter how securely she tried to tuck it—and then the clock! It not only chimed and struck every hour, but it made the room ring every half-hour as well. Betty almost wished herself at home, covered with her own pink-bordered blankets, and watching the dying embers in the open fireplace, which always gave the room such a pleasant glow those dreamy moments before she closed her eyes in sleep; and, too, she missed the wind, which gathered in the mountains and then came sweeping through the mighty oaks, the music of Nature's own grand voice singing in her loneliness.

She had always been strangely susceptible to the subtle influence of the elements and to the poetry which the atmosphere of country life breathed. She instinctively discerned tone and cadence in the movements of the air: when it whispered softly around the house with a light, quick, fantastic touch, it conveyed the idea of a love lyric; when it murmured long and low in an unbroken current from the mountains, with an appealing quiver every now and then, it carried elegy

on its bosom; when it was fresh and full and strong and regular, it represented the heroic hexameter of some noble epic; when it shrieked and raged, ranted and struggled, nothing could seem more realistic than the tragedy it enacted. In the same way the mountain streams appealed to her through all their varying moods, which were brought about by droughts and floods and intermediate conditions. The distant barkings of dogs, which had "treed" an unwary 'possum; the tinklings of sheep-bells or cow-bells; the crowing of a rooster, which, for some reason, decided to make a noise in the dead of night; the shrill tooting of some fox-hunter's horn—all of these were the familiar sounds she had known all her life, and the restlessness of the busy city seemed sordid in comparison.

Toward morning she got a few hours of rest, and when day came she was fully alive to the action of the new life. The first thing after breakfast, as they sat together talking comfortably, as women love to do, her Aunt Margaret spoke of her plans for Betty's pleasure; and then, of course, they went to unpack her trunk, and to look over her clothes.

It was a large, old-fashioned leather trunk, lined inside with buff-color, sprinkled with sprays of pink roses; there was only one tray, which was evidently intended for a hat-box.

The packing was a work of art, and the air of daintiness which pervaded everything made the

display as attractive as if it had come in on the latest steamer from Paris.

"Your mother always had wonderful taste," said her Aunt Margaret, as she ran her eye over the pretty gowns which Charlotte had carefully wrapped in tissue paper. "You will be as well dressed," she continued, "as any girl I know, no matter how extravagant her expenditure. I have not seen anything quite so lovely as this in a long time," and she held up Betty's handsome white lace evening dress; "you can wear this to the cotillion to-night, as first impressions mean a great deal."

She selected one costume for the tea she was going to give, another for a dinner party, and went on at such a rate that Betty wondered how she ever remembered the dates of so many engagements.

"You see, I have only house dresses, ball gowns, and waists," Betty said frankly. "We spent a lot of time ordering samples and trying to match things, and we decided it would be better for me to get my hats and street clothes here." She was a little afraid that her Aunt Margaret might think this a liberty.

"Decidedly better," agreed that lady, who had longed for a daughter, and was delighted at the thought of having a hand in selecting Betty's outfit. "I am anxious for a hairdresser to arrange your hair, and we can go shopping at once. Let

us look over what you have to begin with, and make our plans accordingly."

Then Betty brought out the things that had been her mother's—a set of handsome Russian sables, some beautiful ostrich plumes which had done service in bygone days, a superb bird of paradise, and a rich old-fashioned velvet costume, all of which met with Mrs. Pembroke's entire approval. Their possibilities were indeed promising.

They started out together in a cab. Betty was enchanted with the huge shops and the seemingly endless display of all the dainty little accessories so dear to the feminine heart. She tried on suits and hats, bought gloves and neckwear, and examined everything she saw, until they were both exhausted; then they went home.

Her furs were to be remodeled according to the latest style, her hat ornaments had been used successfully, and she found that the velvet suit required very little alteration, as every seven years fashion has a trick of repeating its caprices. She was both amused and amazed when she discovered how important were the trifling details of her costume—how absolutely essential it was that a certain shape, size, and style should be chosen to make her a presentable member of New York society. Even the stitching of her gloves, and the exact width on the borders of her handkerchiefs were matters not unworthy the serious consideration of her Aunt Margaret. Truly, being well-

dressed required more careful thought and attention than she had dreamed possible. But Betty was as happy and satisfied at the prospect of being correctly gowned as she was weary over the process of arriving at that desirable stage of her social experience.

When she came down that evening all ready for the cotillion, wearing the cream-colored lace gown which her Aunt Margaret had selected for the occasion, and carrying the big bunch of violets which her Cousin John had sent, they were delighted with her appearance.

"By Jove, I shall be proud to introduce my friends to my country cousin!" said her Cousin John, helping her on with her wrap.

"And I shall be proud to be seen with Ichabod in his new rôle," she retorted, pointing laughingly to his high hat.

The carriage took them down Fifth Avenue. Betty was a very expectant young lady as she looked at the magnificent homes they passed, and wondered about the entertainments which were in store for her. There hung in the hall at The Oaks a large engraving which represented a dinner that had been given to the Duke of Wellington after the battle of Waterloo, and her idea of grandeur was based upon that gorgeous scene.

In the dressing-room that evening Mrs. Pembroke of New York introduced, "My niece, Miss Pembroke, of Virginia," to some of her intimates,

and there was great satisfaction in the ring of her voice as she spoke. She was also pleased to see that Betty was attracting the attention which is always accorded an extremely beautiful stranger.

Once in the ballroom, her Cousin John introduced his friends by the dozen, and mere acquaintances came up to be presented to his charming partner. He was delighted with the ease and grace with which she met them—and a little surprised, too, for he did not realize what it meant to be a reigning belle in a country neighborhood in Virginia. He noticed that she danced exceptionally well, and that time and again Barry Burton—a “catch” from every worldly standpoint—sought her for his partner in the german figures, and, what was more to the point, that she was returning his leads right along. Then her Cousin John knew that she was amply able to look out for herself.

During one of the figures, when she and Barry Burton stood before the chaperones, she overheard a lady say to another who was sitting next to her, “Who is the lovely girl in the exquisite lace gown? That lace is rare and old—it couldn’t be had now for love or money, and those pearl ornaments must have been her great-grandmother’s. *She* can certainly trace *her* genealogy.”

“She is another one of those Southern girls who has come up to seek a rich Northern husband,” was the reply, so distinct and sharp that Barry

Burton, fearing Betty's feelings might be hurt, would have gladly quickened their pace if it had been possible.

"What an oddity that ill-mannered old lady must be!" Betty laughed, struck with the absurdity of her maliciousness. "If all the home talent developed like that," she continued, as they were still moving on in the figure, "I should think the men would be driven to hunt wives elsewhere. It is lucky that she is the exception and not the rule."

Barry was charmed with the utter indifference with which she received this thrust. "I have always heard," he whispered, as the leader blew his whistle, "that the other States were surrounded by land and water, but that Virginia was surrounded by a halo—I believe it now."

Going home that night, her Cousin John said: "Betty, I am delighted with you. You quite surpassed my most sanguine expectations. But confess, now—weren't you a little afraid before you went that you would be a wallflower—didn't you feel a bit of misgiving about being a social failure?"

"How ridiculous, Cousin John! Of course I didn't. Your ballroom is larger and more splendid than any I ever saw, there were more people than I am accustomed to, and there was more formality than we have at home; but I went to see and to have a good time, and I had it," she an-

swered, in the fresh, breezy way which had won for her so many friends.

"And you always will as long as you take such a cheerful view of life. Nobody can resist a natural flow of good spirits," and her Cousin John fell to wishing that she belonged to them for good and all.

In due course of social events there came numerous theater parties, where she laughed and cried by turns; dinners, where she met well-dressed people, and yet there were times when she would have been less bored by some of her unpretentious country friends. Best of all, however, there were coaching parties, where she was in her element. In fact, it seemed to Betty that all whom she met vied with one another in giving her the most agreeable impression of New York.

"Cousin John, I am learning the ways of the world with a vengeance," she announced one evening, while they sat in his library waiting for dinner to be served.

"What have you been doing to-day?" he asked, feeling that she was leading up to some sort of an adventure. Betty's way of telling things amused him very much.

"I went to a large luncheon, and then to a bridge party, of course—thanks to you for teaching me the game. The way these dear people love one another is amazing!"

"What do you mean?" he asked, not seeing

any connection in her remarks. "I hope they didn't give you anything to drink," he laughed.

"Oh, I'm coming to the point, if you'll give me time," she continued. "At the luncheon I looked around at the ladies assembled, and made a mental note of all the comments I had heard about each individual from the people who were then apparently her friends."

"A very Christian-like thing for a young lady from the country to do," he teased; "but go on. Being a polluted city person, I have a right to know what these pleasant people do think of one another. Did they tell you anything about me?"

"No, of course they didn't. One woman was said to be dressing better than her husband could afford; another looked like a feather duster because she wore the dowdy finery of a rich woman who passed her clothes on; one was considered much too Frenchy in her remarks, and she, in her turn, pronounced one of her neighbors an untidy person, and declared that the other was a dangerous talker—and so it went on. The most cheerful person at the luncheon was a young woman who had recently been divorced, and she seemed to be celebrating the happy event."

"I should think she would," he laughed, with unfeigned enjoyment of her naïveté.

"She talked of her beaux, her engagements for everything, and was as full of life and animation as a débutante at her first ball."

"Don't you believe *they* are so gay—they are generally scared to death, poor young things! It takes many different kinds of people to make a world, you know. What next?"

"Why do so many persons tell such ugly things about those whose friends they pretend to be, Cousin John? It is so damaging."

"And damnable," he added.

"Do you suppose the excitement of playing bridge, and of getting worn out traveling from one entertainment to another develops the wild animal in people and makes them long to tear something to pieces?" She was thinking seriously over the problem.

"It's a contagious disease, Betty, and develops rapidly," he answered earnestly.

"I know I am catching it," she laughed.

"We'll nurse you through it and send you back to your mother all right. I think the germ that causes it should be called 'Unrest,' and he is a pretty bad bug, but if the disease is detected in time and treated with common sense by a skillful doctor, it doesn't necessarily prove fatal. Some of those women would be shocked if they realized that their sharp tongues had done anybody real harm. They don't mean to be malicious—they only want to put some spice into their conversation, and for the want of better food for thought they prey on one another's little foibles."

"To-day there was a regular quarrel at one

table," Betty continued; "one woman laid down her cards and refused to play, then there was the disgusting word 'cheat,' and an angry contention was the result."

"How ill-bred!" Her Cousin John was beginning to be somewhat surprised himself.

"Then, some of the women insisted on playing for money against the hostess' wishes—did you ever hear of such a thing? Taking in washing for a living would hardly be a less wearing affair than this everlasting social strife."

"It's a struggle—struggle all the time for something they never get. Contentment is a goal never to be reached by such a road."

"And yet, Cousin John, I really am having a lovely time. I just happen to be in the humor tonight to pick all the flaws out and hold them up for you to look at, because they really are amusing, you know. The great hobby now seems to be to brand people as 'common.' Everybody's common—everything is common—and that is the sum total of the determination to belittle, to pull down. They seem to think that 'common' is the very meanest thing that can be said about a person—and it is almost as mean as what the man said about his wife when he sent her back to her father."

"What was that?" he inquired eagerly. He was always keen for one of Betty's stories.

"A Mr. Browne—at least so we will call him—married a Miss White, and took her to his

home. They lived together very happily, as far as anybody knew, till about a year after, when the girl's father received this letter from his son-in-law: 'Dear sir, I want to tell you that I think your daughter one of the best women that ever lived, and I will cheerfully divide my last crust with her. I will provide for her as long as we both live, but for goodness' sake come and get her—*she bores me to death.*' I think that the meanest, most hateful thing he could have said about her, don't you? And I think calling people common is almost as mean, because it is just as—intangible I suppose is the word I want to use."

John Pembroke laughed heartily.

"I am really enjoying my first venture into society fully, Cousin John. Don't think I'm not, for when I get back to the country I know there will be times when I shall wish myself back here again. I am in the pulling-to-pieces humor myself to-night."

"'But I have caught the contagion of a world that I never loved; Pleased myself with approval of those that I never approved; Paltered with pleasures that pleased not, and fame where no fame could be,'"

he quoted, insinuating that he knew Betty had reached the point where she would hate to give up a luncheon, a card party, a dinner, or any other social pleasure.

"That is right," she acquiesced, laughing;

"and if it were not for the lovable, sweet-natured people one occasionally meets mixed in with the throng, a little leaven to leaven the whole lump, I suppose I should want to 'Take the world into my hand, and shape it, and make it anew.'"

But this mood of Betty's was only because there had been an unpleasant episode at a card party. The next morning at breakfast she was enthusiastic. The play the night before had been fine, and, as she looked over her mail and saw that her invitations were from just the right people for just the right things, she was in a gale of delight.

"Cousin John," she declared, "I take back every word I said last night—other people's ugly moods had affected me unpleasantly. The world's lovely," and she continued to untie the box that contained Barry Burton's daily bunch of violets.

In watching her pleasure her Cousin John felt, with renewed freshness, all the subtle charm of the gay social world, for Betty constantly expressed to him her intense enjoyment of the new experience, and her point of view was as interesting as it was novel.

Throughout the winter, which passed quickly, Barry Burton's attentions never wavered. Her Aunt Margaret wondered whether Betty really cared for him, but there was no way of finding out. On all matters of this kind Betty maintained a profound silence—a silence which almost suggested that she had never thought of such a thing

as love or sentiment in connection with herself. She received his attentions as unconcernedly as if they had been invitations to dinner, shopping expeditions, or any other part of the programme of a winter in New York. The night before she was to leave for home he was to dine with them informally. There was to be only one other guest, a Ralph Redwood, who was a friend of her Cousin John's—a promising young fellow, he said, with his way to make in the world. That was all he would tell about him.

"You can't catch him, Betty. He's too indifferent," he said jokingly.

"Is he? That's my long suit, too. There never was anybody that I couldn't match with indifference," she replied, laughing.

She was talking to Mr. Burton and her Cousin John when the stranger was announced. When he entered the drawing-room, her Cousin John went forward to meet him, and when Betty turned around, preparatory to the introduction, the first look she cast upon him made her hesitate a moment. She was conscious of a strange, sudden, unaccountable thrill, very unlike what we call indifference. What could it mean? She was not given to thrills like an impressionable schoolgirl, yet her heart beat madly. For the first time a personality had, at a glance, made an indelible impression upon her—upon her who had always ridiculed such romantic folly! She controlled her-

self, though the blood rushed to her face, and greeted Mr. Redwood with her usual composure.

There was that in him that was different—very different—from any one else whom she had ever seen—and still she could neither analyze nor define this difference.

His face was not handsome, according to the rules of regularity of feature, but it was strong of outline, and the expression was peculiarly gentle—almost sad in its seriousness. His gray eyes were full, soft, and handsome, his dark-brown hair was smooth and thick, and there was something about his mouth which made one feel quite certain that if he determined to do a thing he would do it. And yet, withal, his face had that *good* look in it that belongs to the sweet-souled few. He was of medium height, and his figure was athletic, but, in spite of his fine, manly bearing, that suggested a naturally cheerful nature, no one could see him and doubt that he had a history, that he had known suffering of some kind.

She felt strangely drawn to him, strangely sympathetic, and when she shook hands with him, according to the Southern custom, his grip was firm and pleasant.

"I see you are a Southerner, Miss Pembroke," he said, taking a seat near her. She was charmed with his rich, deep voice.

"A Virginian," she answered. "What is your State?"

"Kentucky, but I have been living in New York a long time. I love the South, though," he added, "and I love to hear Southern people talk."

"Redwood"—"Kentucky"—for the first time Betty's mind grasped what her eyes had read on the shabby old newspaper the night she crossed the ferry.

All during dinner Ralph Redwood could not keep from looking at her as she sat opposite him by Barry Burton's side, and time and again their eyes met. There was a magnetic sympathy between them, an understanding, which certainly could not be accounted for by their having come from the same part of the country—and both were conscious of it.

Then "Redwood," "Panic in Town," "Shock to Community," passed before her eyes unpleasantly. Surely there was some mystery, and, as her mind dwelt upon it, she remembered her Cousin John's reticence in discussing his guest. It puzzled her as much as Ralph Redwood's personality charmed her. She wondered perplexedly what part the "dream man" played in it all, what thread of connection there could possibly be between two so totally unlike.

After dinner the host had intended to entertain his friend in the library and to give Barry Burton a chance this last evening of Betty's visit; but he saw that she liked—yes, even preferred—to talk to the stranger. With a woman's intuition, her

Aunt Margaret decided in her own mind that Betty did not care to hear anything serious from Barry Burton; so she made the conversation general. She spoke of having heard Emma Eames sing very beautifully the previous evening. Ralph Redwood, who also had been at the opera, said, with much warmth:

"I think a good voice is the grandest gift God ever gave any human being. It raises the soul above all earthly things—it appeals to that within us which makes us only a little lower than the angels."

Betty wished then that she had given up all social opportunities and had carried out her original plan of working hard to bring out her voice. She had taken the first step in the lesson of "falling in love."

When, presently, Ralph asked her to sing, she chose Isidore de Lara's "The Garden of Sleep." Her voice, though untrained, had a peculiar and thrilling sweetness. As the song appealed to her strongly, she put all her warm, throbbing heart into it. Ralph's eyes glowed with appreciation, and when she finished he asked her to sing "My Old Kentucky Home." A thousand recollections rushed upon him as she complied—the sad, the gay, the sweet, the bitter—all that had claimed a place in the storehouse of his memory; and her voice, her presence, filled his very soul.

The evening slipped by only too quickly. When

Ralph Redwood went out into the cold street he made his way home instinctively, conscious only that the stars in the heavens above shone upon him, and that the moon shed her rays over the great city, as though it were a mere speck, which came in for its share of the motherly watchfulness she was keeping over the earth. His whole being was filled with one thought, one great new emotion; he was oblivious of everything else that belonged to this world. Betty's face, mirroring the pure soul within, seemed to start up from the most unexpected places. He could see the willowy movements of her graceful figure floating in the shadows; he could feel the pressure of her hand in bidding him good-by. It was the kind of hand he liked—a hand full of character—a hand which, though smooth and shapely, and well kept, was suggestive of strength and firmness. He still heard ringing in his ears the words of that song, "O heart of my heart, O life of my life, I am waiting for thee in the hush of the corn." Would those words echo in his soul forever? Had the pathos of that voice, which needed no cultivation to charm him, made an impression that would never fade away?

The next day was Ash Wednesday, and Betty went home to The Oaks.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER all the excitement of a gay winter Betty found it very pleasant to be back again in her own dear home, to ride Bird, her little sorrel thoroughbred, recklessly over the rugged roads, and to breathe once more the pure mountain air. She was so young that she looked upon life with absolute lightness of heart—as yet no cares, no sorrows had come to darken her way.

She thought of all the people she had so recently met and of those she had known longer—in a comparative way. She was glad to collect her thoughts and form her opinions in the quiet atmosphere so conducive to reflection. Her Aunt Margaret had silently approved of Barry Burton, she was sure, but, while he had all the attractions that combine to make a social favorite, he lacked something—she didn't know what—to make him acceptable to her. Perhaps the purpose of his life was too trivial to be in harmony with her higher ideals; at any rate he had failed to show a manly sympathy with that which she felt to be the better part of her own being.

She realized, however, that any opinion she might have formed in the city was open to a change when she thought over the matter untram-

meled by any artificial standards. To her all the vital elements of existence were crushed or checkered by the excitement of city surroundings—they seemed to her to produce abnormal effects; everything was more like machinery than it was like life. Duty, love, death—everything that goes to make up human experience—affected people strangely when their minds were distracted by the constant demands made by the intercourse with their fellow creatures. Young as she was, she realized all this, and she wanted to form her opinions when she was alone with God—alone with the works of His hands and out of sight of all human effort, strife, turmoil, and doubt. The solemn stillness of the country invited her to dream of Ralph Redwood, to build air-castles of the time when she might see him again; the memory of Barry Burton was only associated with balls and other frivolities of life. She was riding home from her Uncle Archie's the day after she reached The Oaks (wrapped in such reflections), when she heard the clatter of hoofs behind her, and in a few minutes Alice came in sight, urging Ben Bolt on to overtake her. Betty drew rein on Bird and turned to wait for her.

"I have a thousand things to tell you!" Alice cried, leaning over to kiss her. "I just got home from New Orleans last night, and I wanted to see you just as soon as possible to pour into your sympathetic ears my volume of news."

"Come on home with me. We can spend the whole day talking," Betty urged, and they soon pulled up at The Oaks. The bed of tiger-lilies at the tree where they tied their horses was the only thing that as yet gave a suggestion of spring.

"Tell me about yourself first. I am wild to hear about all you've been doing, and then I'll give a full account of myself." Alice's enthusiasm was irresistible, so Betty told as briefly as possible of her trip, touching lightly where Alice would have dwelt long. When she came to the experiences of her last evening in New York, she realized that she did not care to speak of Ralph Redwood to Alice. She was conscious of a feeling that she did not care to bare to the gaze of another. By this time they had reached the library, where they stopped a few minutes before deciding to go upstairs.

"But your beaux! Do be honest and tell me about them. What about that Barry Burton you wrote about so much? Is he good-looking?"

"Very."

"And rich?"

"Tremendously."

"And a social favorite?"

"Quite."

"Well, that's *everything*. I want you to marry him as soon as possible, and invite me to New York to visit you. I've had a lovely time at Mardi Gras; my next move must be a trip to New York."

"Not so fast, Alice," Betty remonstrated, laughing. "You sha'n't marry me off like that before I've had time to have a fling, as you call it."

"You shall marry Barry Burton—I've settled that—I like the name—Mrs. Barry Burton. What more can any girl ask than to live in New York under such favorable circumstances?"

Betty was not sure but that there were other circumstances not quite so brilliant but more to her taste.

"Now to my story," Alice continued.

"Go ahead," Betty insisted, as she seemed to pause to collect her thoughts.

"I am so excited about it all that I scarcely know where to begin. It isn't a story such as one hears every day, I warn you. It is quite out of the ordinary." They were now in Betty's room, attracted by its greater privacy. Alice was lounging on the couch half propped up with pink pillows, her dark eyes brilliant with eagerness. Betty sat facing her, waiting for her to begin.

"It's a long story and I am going to tell you all," she declared, as if she had just made up her mind. "The day you left for New York I met Henry Harvey at the post-office, as I wrote you. I was immensely taken with him, and it seems also that he was with me. Mamma and I called on his mother a few days later—it was an awfully queer feeling going to Brookwood to see some one else

in my own old home! Our visit was promptly returned, and from that time Henry Harvey was at Sweetbriar constantly. He's a dear! I want you to meet him. At first we rode together; then he began coming over in his trap, and we often drove together. One day his high-stepper was whirling along, and I was talking away as glibly as usual, when I suddenly put my hand to my collar, and—merciful goodness! my little pearl pin was gone! Betty, I can't describe my feeling—you know what that pin has to do with my past? It was the only clue I had in the world to my identity. It was the monogram pin—the pin I think so much of!"

Betty's eyes were shining brighter every minute. Alice had touched upon a subject she had never mentioned before.

"I gave a startled cry," she continued, "and told him about the loss. It was the first time I had worn it for a long while. I can't imagine what induced me to put it on, but as it turned out it was fortunate that I did. We both looked carefully in the bottom of the trap, and also on the seat between us—there was no sign of it. I was sure that I had dropped it outside and that it was gone. Then Henry shook out the buggy robe, and the pin dropped at his feet. He picked it up, looked at it, as I thought, to see why I had made such a fuss over it, and then handed it to me. When he did he had such a strange, inquiring look

on his face that I asked what was the matter. He replied that his mother had a pin exactly like mine! When he told me that I couldn't conceal my confusion. Wasn't it an odd coincidence when it is such an unusual pin?"

Betty remembered the pin; it was made of the letters "A" and "M" intertwined into a monogram, and the whole was set in a wreath of forget-me-nots.

"I felt my face get flaming red," Alice went on, excitedly; "I was so nervous I could scarcely speak, and I then and there told him my story—something I had never even touched upon before to anybody. You probably know to what I refer?"

"I don't know any of the particulars," Betty assured her. She was intensely interested and didn't want to miss this opportunity of hearing the story from Alice's own lips.

"Mamma and papa—I mean Mr. and Mrs. Stephenson—adopted me when I was a baby. Of course you know that?"

"Yes."

"I am always thrilled with a strange, wild feeling when I think of it. They were traveling at the time in Louisiana. Cholera broke out in the little town where they happened to be, and my own father and mother being among the victims, I was turned over hurriedly to Mrs. Stephenson. Everything was in such a state of confusion and

everybody was so uneasy about the epidemic that no one bothered about any details. Mr. and Mrs. Stephenson brought me away as soon as the quarantine was raised. They never knew who my parents were, as they, too, were strangers traveling there, and everything was burned to prevent spreading the disease. This is the story Mrs. Stephenson has always told me, though I have taken it with a grain of salt. I really believe that she never made any effort to find out the things that mean so much to me. I believe after Mr. Stephenson's death, which took place soon after they adopted me, she was afraid some of my people might claim me, and she was not willing to give me up. At any rate, the only possible clue I had to my identity was that pin, which was in my bib when I was handed to the Stepbensons, and I was naturally panic-stricken at the thought that it was gone. Betty, you don't know what anguish all this mystery has caused me!"

She stopped, loosened her tie and collar, and fell back exhausted on the pillows. She was panting for breath. Betty raised the window and closed the blinds to shut out the light that was pouring in upon them.

"When you feel better, go on with your story," she said, again seating herself beside Alice. "I am deeply interested."

"Henry told me to talk it all over with his mother. Of course I went to see her as soon as I

could, and she told me that when she was a girl she was sent to New Orleans to a convent to school—she was delicate, and the doctors thought it would be well for her to spend the winters in the South. There she met a charming Creole girl named Marie Chatard, to whom she was devoted. She and this friend had pins made as a token of their love for each other.”

“Isn’t that like schoolgirls!” Betty said, the tears coming into her eyes at the thought of those two sealing their friendship in the long ago, little thinking what the future would bring forth.

“They decided to have a monogram of their initials, ‘A’ and ‘M,’ and then Mrs. Harvey said she suggested the wreath of forget-me-nots. She said that Marie Chatard was an orphan, that shortly after she left the convent she met and married an Englishman named Clarke, and that later she named her infant daughter ‘Alice’ for Mrs. Harvey. My bib had ‘Alice’ embroidered on it. Mrs. Harvey said she had been told that Mr. and Mrs. Clarke and the baby had all died during the cholera epidemic. After comparing dates, Mrs. Harvey corresponded concerning the matter with friends in New Orleans and it was pretty conclusively established that I am Alice Clarke. Mrs. Stephenson is bitterly opposed to my taking the name. Being a girl I suppose it doesn’t make much difference, so as she really has done a lot for me, I am going to humor the whim.”

"It won't make any difference anyway when you marry," Betty said, thoughtfully.

"No, not a bit—that's what I thought," Alice continued. "And now comes the bright part of my story, for you know 't isn't my nature to dwell long on mysteries or disagreeables. My Creole cousins, the Legrandes, invited me to New Orleans for the Mardi Gras, and I, of course, went. I couldn't very well write and explain all this to you, but that is how my trip came about. Betty, it was like going to another planet. The life was simply fascinating. The old friends of my mother's made a great fuss over me, and the warmth and cordiality of the people were delightful. I had a glorious time. I felt like saying one long 'A-a-h!' of delight over the parades—they were magnificent. I went to all the balls, danced with masked men, who gave me all kinds of souvenirs. Those people are a little world to themselves, and a very delightful world it is, too. And now comes the part you may not approve of?" Alice had a way of turning a sentence into an interrogation.

"Go on; I am tremendously excited," Betty urged.

"I forgot to tell you that before I went to New Orleans I had become engaged to Henry Harvey."

"I thought as much," Betty laughed.

"Well, he was very sweet and attentive to me—I dare say the mystery surrounding me made me very interesting to him, and when it was all un-

raveled I suppose he thought the romantic thing to do was to propose, and I, of course, accepted him. You see I haven't had any great amount of experience yet, and I thought that was the thing to do."

"You seem to look at it pretty coolly," Betty suggested, rather surprised at Alice's lack of enthusiasm.

"I had many admirers in New Orleans," Alice went on, seemingly by way of explanation, "and those Creoles do know how to make love too delightfully for anything. I met the most fascinating man down there—dark and very handsome in the Creole style. His name was Adolphe de Brune, and the ripple of his beautiful, manly voice made the English language take on new meaning. When I left I was engaged to him, too. Now what do you think?"

"That at this rate you won't have to wait long for a name to which you'll have a perfect right," Betty said, amazed at the cool admission. "Are you crazy, Alice?"

"Not a bit crazy, Betty. I simply couldn't resist Adolphe's persuasive tenderness. My motto is: *Not at all fast, but by no means slow*, and I didn't have to go to a family coat of arms to find it," she laughed, pointing to the Terrell coat of arms that hung over Betty's desk, its "Sans Crainte" looking them in the face. "I am living up to my motto, that's all. If you won't engage

yourself to a man you haven't any real hold on his attention—that is all there is to it—and *hurt* one of the great strong things!—pooh!”

Betty couldn't help laughing.

“You look surprised, Betty dear. Don't be. Believe me, if you are always so perfectly proper you will miss all the color in life. I don't want mine to be a sketch in black-and-white—I want it to be a magnificent picture all finished and splendid in its warmth, size and beauty. I *adore* admiration, and I must have it. Look at your own motto and don't be afraid!”

“But do you intend to marry either of those men?” Betty asked, ignoring the advice to herself. It seemed to her that at the rate Alice had commenced she would be likely to make a lot of history for herself in a short time.

“Never! The very thought of going back to Brookwood gives me the creeps. I love the place,” then, looking around cautiously to see that there was no one to listen, she whispered, “but I am desperately afraid of it. I wouldn't live there again for the world. Besides, I am tired of the country—when I make a change I want to go to the city to live, where there are street-cars, theaters, people, bustle and *life*.”

The eager look on her face expressed her intense longing for gayety and excitement.

When Alice left that afternoon, Aunt Lucy came up to Betty's room, and, as was usually the

case when she had something on her mind she wanted to say, she pretended to be putting things to rights. First she straightened out the pillows on the pink couch, putting a plain pink one next to a white one with pink flowers on it, then another pink one, and finally beating up the one that had a striped pink and white cover. Aunt Lucy looked intently at the tiny pink flowers that ran up the white stripes in this favorite cushion of hers as if she had just discovered them. Then she straightened out for the second time that day (though the girls hadn't touched the bed) the muslin draperies that hung from its canopy and were tied back with pink ribbons. Aunt Lucy loved that room. She loved to look at the corner filled with pictures of beautiful heads—there were stories connected with those pictures, and she tried to remember what Betty had told her. There were Raphael's "Madonna di Foligno," the wonderful "Madonna di San Sisto," Vecchio's "Santa Barbara," Angelo's "The Three Fates," Reynolds' "Angels," a "St. Cecilia"; then off to themselves were horse pictures, some hunting scenes, and the three pictures that Aunt Lucy adored—" 'Twix' Love and Duty," "Too Late," and "Forgiveness." That was indeed a wonderful story told by pictures, she thought. Wherever she had anything particularly important to say she prefaced her remarks by examining the pictures with the close attention of a collector. "Honey,"

she finally said abruptly, "did she tole whether dem Harveys likes dat new place o' deirn?"

"She didn't say, Aunt Lucy," Betty answered, feeling that some neighborhood gossip was coming next.

"You know 'bout dat place, don't you?" Aunt Lucy spoke in a low voice, looking around as if she didn't like even the walls to hear.

"I don't know anything particular about it, except they say it used to be haunted."

"I knows plenty 'bout it," Aunt Lucy continued in a tone indicating that what she did know was well worth hearing. "Peachy—dat's Mrs. Stephenson's cook—done tole me all. She says she useter hear somebody up dar callin' her in a shrill woman's voice, 'Peachy, er Peachy!' Den she'd step ter de libry'y an' say, 'Miss Alice, you done call me?' Miss Alice say, 'No, Peachy, I ain' call you.' Den she step over ter Mrs. Stephenson's room an' say, 'Miss Mary, you done call me?' an' she say, 'No, Peachy, what put dat notion in yo' haid?' Den Peachy say she tole her dat it mus' be de sperit of ole Mrs. Stephenson, de ole English lady, callin' her, 'cause somebody had certn'y done call her. Den Peachy say, 'Miss Mary, dis house is hanted,' an' Mrs. Stephenson say, '*H-y-s-h*, Peachy, don' say nothin'; if you does, I can' sell de place.'

"De colored folks up dar say dat when Mrs. Stephenson an' Miss Alice useter go 'way dat de

hants useter light up Brookwood an' give a dance reg'lar, an' sence de place done pass in de han's of new folks, dey say you kin hear dem ole Stephensons an' dyar hant frien's moanin' in de buryin'-groun' up dar scan'lous. When de house was empty, 'fo' dem Harveys come, dey say dey useter see de lights gwine f'om de buryin'-groun' up ter de house at Brookwood; den de house would be blazin' wid lights, an' de musick would be gwine, an' de hants jes' a-floatin' roun' on de slippery floor in de big hall up dar. 'Twus always suppen cuyous 'bout dat place: I ain' never 'zackly make out what is de matter up dar. Some says 'tis all 'cause dat first ole Mrs. Stephenson taken die 'thout 'fessin'."

"Without professing what?" Betty asked. She had kept profoundly silent before for fear of breaking the spell of Aunt Lucy's mood for a ghost tale.

"'Fessin' 'ligion, honey. She died a sinner."

Betty longed to hear more, but having unburdened her mind sufficiently, Aunt Lucy refused to be questioned further. She went off to feed the chickens, and while she was out in the back yard calling, "Coo-chee, coo-chee," with all her might, Betty thought over the Brookwood situation. From what Alice herself had said she was satisfied there was something more materially wrong about the place than merely Aunt Lucy's theory about the "hants."

It suddenly occurred to her that Mrs. Stephenson and Alice had never been to church since they came to the neighborhood, and she wondered if they, too, were "sinners." Some of Alice's views undoubtedly sounded like it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE spring came on with all its splendor. Although the household at The Oaks welcomed as many guests as usual, and Betty continued to receive her friends with warm cordiality, the novelty of being a young lady had worn off; she was drifting into her old way of liking to be alone with her books and with her flowers, which bloomed that year, it seemed to her, with unusual luxuriance. She was distinctly in a meditative frame of mind. What could be the cause?

Letters from Barry Burton were revealing to her the true state of his feelings; there was a probability that he would come to Virginia very soon, and the general trend of things was troubling her.

Spring had made way for the greater glory of summer, when one day there arrived in the town a very smart-looking stranger. The clerk sized him up when he left his baggage at the hotel, and so did the liveryman when he ordered a horse and asked directions about going to The Oaks.

"How far is it from town?" he asked.

"About fifteen miles, suh, an' you can't miss the way—jes' keep right in the main road, straight on by Monticello—an' you'll know the place by the

round-top windows—a big brick house with wings on each side, big white pillars in the front, green blinds, an' white trimmin's—an' a big yard, an' a driveway through a lawn that is terraced down to the main road in front," and the good-natured liveryman beamed upon the stylish-looking stranger. Barry had donned his riding outfit before leaving at the hotel his numerous suit cases, all covered with foreign marks.

"What is Monticello?" he asked.

"Jefferson's home, suh. Some call it 'Monticello,' but most of the people hereabouts call it 'Monticello.'"

A few minutes later the hotel clerk stepped down to the stable to learn from the liveryman the stranger's destination, and carried the information that "he traveled around with as much gear as a trotting horse."

Unconscious of the interest his advent had excited, Barry Burton rode through the business street of the town, crossed the railroad track and was soon in the full enjoyment of the early June morning. The air was redolent with the odor of honeysuckle, which covered large portions of the fence on either side of the road, and as he climbed the steep mountain he looked back upon the straggling town, stretched out in the valley below.

Nature seemed on a grand holiday. The sky was as blue as Italy's, the earth was clothed in rich, vivid green, and from the road, which lay

like a gleaming red ribbon on the landscape, he caught glimpses from time to time of stately brick houses with white pillars, green blinds and white trimmings peeping out from clumps of trees which were dense with foliage. When he reached the top of the mountain, he saw Scotch broom growing in rank profusion through the woods, and between two sudden hills a pair of Lombardy poplars lifted high their proud heads. "What kind of country can this be?" he asked himself, for he was keenly observant when he traveled, even if he had never taken kindly to intellectual pursuits.

He had evidently forgotten, if he had ever known, that among the hills where he found himself some Virginia statesmen had dwelt, and that the very road he was then traveling was called "Presidents' Road" in honor of Jefferson and Monroe, who had lived there once upon a time. When the liveryman had spoken about his passing Jefferson's home, he vaguely realized that some confusion existed in his mind as to whether it was Thomas Jefferson, Joseph Jefferson, or Jefferson Davis that was meant.

When he passed over the rough stretch known as the "Devil's Featherbed," his horse went lame, so that he was jogging along uncomfortably when he came across an old negro wearing a gray slouch hat with a broad band of crêpe around it, a rusty old brown waistcoat over a striped shirt, and a pair of sadly faded blue cotton breeches.

"Ef you'll stop a minute, marster, I'll see wheder dat horse ain' pick up a rock in he foot," the old man said, obligingly, after they had exchanged bows and he had mentally noted that the stranger seemed "mannerable."

Barry pulled up his horse and thanked him, while the latter lifted the complaining member. Barry noticed the tremendous brass ring he wore on the middle finger of his right hand.

"Whew-w-w, I sh'd say he had done grab up a rock. I'll sen' fer de blacksmif ter come pull 'tout, 'cayse it's wedged in so dat I cyarn't budge it. Anthony! you Anthony!" he called at the top of his voice, and in a minute a boy with a beaming black face, shining eyes, and snow-white teeth came running around the curve in the road, shouting, "Gran'pappy, I'se comin' fas' es I kin!"

"Run down dyah, an' tell Nightingale ter come es quick es he kin an' git a rock out o' dis horse's foot fer dis gemman. Go fas' es you kin—de gemman ain' got all day fer ter wait," said the old man, hurrying the boy with gestures as well as words.

While Anthony was gone, the old man took a seat on a big rock by the roadside, and commenced a conversation.

Barry, instantly won by his ability as an entertainer, sat on his horse and listened.

"You don' know enny o' dese folks 'roun' hyah, does you, marster?" he asked.

"I have never been here before," Barry answered, evasively.

"Well, you see dat place over dyah—dat big brick house wid de long poach?" pointing his scrawny finger in the direction indicated and not waiting for an answer. "Dyah's whah ole Marse George Mansfiel' useter live 'fo' de war, an' dey useter have grate times out dyah. Marse George had a house right full o' young folks, an' dey was all good-lookin' an' mighty pyeart horseback riders. Dem folks useter live high, dey did. Had plenty o' money, an' niggers, too."

The old man saw that Barry's interest was aroused, and he continued:

"Right 'cross dat red hill over yander, Marse Billy Hollidy useter live; an' one freezin' cole night Marse Billie an' his wife, Mis' Nancy, tooken give a big pawty. All de young folks fer miles 'roun' was dyah—all de Lewises an' Pembrokes an' Terrells an' evvybawdy—an' dey had grate fiddlin' an' dancin'. Mis' Nancy, she was jes' buzzin' 'roun' seein' dat evvybawdy had a good time, an' Marse Billy, bein's 'twus sech a cole night, wus drinkin' right smart, an' so wus heaps o' de yuthers."

The old negro paused a moment to heighten the effect; then he resumed his tale:

"I driv Marse Allford out dyah dat night, an' Marse Billy made us drivers onhitch an' put blankets on de horses; an' den we stayed in one o'

de kitchen rooms, crackin' jokes by a big lawg fire, 'cep'n dem times when we had ter go de roun's an' see dat de horses wus all right; an' den, too, we'd go cashuny an' peep in at de winders an' watch de young folks a-dancin' an' a-flirtin'. An' all de time I notice dat Marse Allford wus payin' his respec's ter Mis' Betty, Marse George Mansfield's younges' dorter. Dey wus de bes'-lookin' couple dyah, too, 'cep'n Mis' Sophie Terrell an' Marse Jim Pembroke—dey is Mis' Betty Pembroke's pa an' ma, an' dey always got de praise fer looks an' manners—an' I liked ter see 'em steppin' 'toff t'gether."

Barry's attention quickened perceptibly at this mention of Miss Betty Pembroke.

"Arter while, Marse Allford seed me th'ough one o' de winders, an' he step outside an' say, 'Guy, come hyah a minit.' When I went, he spoke kinder low-like, so'd nobawdy could hyah, an' he sed he'd give me fifty dollars ef I'd drive him ter Gawd'nsville right away 'fo' de train lef'. 'Tain' been many times in my life dat I done see fifty dollars, less mo' have it myse'f, so I sed, 'Yas, suh, Marse Allford, I'll hitch up right away, an' do my bes' ter git yer dyah in time'; an' he tole me whah ter have de carriage, not too close ter de house, an' I thought suppen mus' be up, sholy. I had a pyah jes' es good horses es dyah wus in dat town, an' I had dat carriage dyah in no time; an' meanwhiles, I'd done gethered up all de shawls an'

robes I could fine outer de yuther carridges, 'cayse 'twas sech a cole night.

"All de time I was ruminatin' in my haid what mek Marse Allford wan' go ter Gawd'nsville in sech a hurry. Pres'n'ly I seed Marse Allford hepin' Mis' Betty Mansfiel' outer one o' de secon'-story windows at de back o' de house. Den my heart mos' fail me, 'cayse I thought sholy Marse Allford didn' know what kinder folks dem Mansfiel'ses wus when yer get 'em started, an' dey sot so much sto' by dem young ladies, too; but I thought 'bout dat fifty dollars, an' I kep' my seat, hol'n dem horses. I heerd somebawdy say arter'ards dat Marse Allford an' Mis' Betty wus like Romyyo an' Jewlyhet, but I don' know who dey wus—never live 'bout hyah in my time."

Barry laughed outright.

Old Guy rubbed his hands together, and then continued:

"Mis' Betty had on some kine o' white-lookin' dress wid no neck in it an' no sleeves hardly, an' I wus sho she was gwine frez, but soon's ever she tech de groun' Marse Allford put his big overcoat roun' her, an' in less time dan it teks ter tell it, dey wus in dat carridge an' I wus drivin' 'way. De musick an' de dancin' wus mekin' so much fuss at de house dat nobawdy heerd us. I driv es fas' es de horses could go, seem ter me like, but evvy now an' den Marse Allford'd stick he haid out de winder, an' say, 'Go fas' es yer kin, Guy, we ain'

got a minit ter loose! ' I knowed den he had heerd 'bout dem Mansfiel'ses an' wus skeerd, an' I wus skeered, too, so I let yer know we went 'long fas' es dem horses could cyar us."

Old Guy warmed up to the story more and more as it progressed.

" Seem ter me like I'd frez ter def, settin' dyah on dat box-seat drivin'. 'Twus twenty-five miles at least ter Gawd'nsville, an' I was feerd de horses would give out 'fo' we got dyah, so evvy now an' den I'd try ter save 'em up a leetle, but Marse Allford'd allays holler out, 'Hurry up dyah, Guy!' De road wus good an' we made de fus' twenty miles all right, an' I thought we wus sholy safe. I wus gwine up a hill an' I slowed up a leetle. 'Twus a *reel* still cole night, an' when I slowed up I heerd de noise in de distance like a pack o' houn's right arter a red fox, an' I knowed dem Mansfiel'ses wus comin'. Marse Allford, he heered it, too, an' he sed, ' Fer Gawd's sake, drive up, Guy! ' an' I driv up, too; but I heerd Mis' Betty say ter him, ' Don' tek de Lord's name in vain, whatever yer do.' We ought ter be 'ligious, dat's sho, but 'twon' no time fer 'spressin' it den."

Seeing that Barry's interest was visibly increasing, Guy's voice became more and more impressive.

" We got closeter an' closeter ter Gawd'nsville, an' dat soun' got closeter an' closeter ter we all, an' I wus skeered plum ter def. De sun wus jes'

risin' when we driv in ter Gawd'nsville, an' I look back a minit, an' 'bout a mile behine us I seed ole Marse George Mansfiel' on his horse, an' Marse War'nton an' Marse Steptoe on dyah horses, an' dey all had a double-bar'l shot-gun apiece, an' dat road wus right full o' dawgs—bull-dawgs, cur-dawgs, houn's, fices, an' evvy kine o' dawg dat ever I heerd of—an' dey wus jes' comin' es hard es dey could tyar. I driv up ter de train jes' es quick es howsomever I could, an' I wus all in a trimble. Marse Allford hopped out, lookin' jes' es white es a sheet, an' hepped Mis' Betty out all done up in his coat an' de robes, an' put her on de train in no time. Jes' es Marse George an' his boys come up, de train she move right off, an' de lars' I see o' Marse Allford he wus stan'in' on de back plat-foam wavin' his hankchef at 'em: but ef we'd been a minit later Marse Allford wouldn' a-been a-wavin' dat hankchef—no siree!

"I was so skeered fer myse'f dat I driv 'roun' ter de lib'ry stable an' onhitched my horses, an' den I clom' up in de hay-lof' an' got under some hay, whah I didn' think de debble hisse'f could fine me, an' dyah I stayed tell de lars' one o' dem Mansfiel'ses an' dawgs lef' town dat day. Ter tell de truf, I wus 'feerd ter meet enny o' dem folks fer a long time arter'ards. I heerd dat Marse Allford telegraph 'em back dat he an' Mis' Betty wus married in Wash'n'ton, but I ain' never seed 'em sence."

When he finished his story he became silent, to give it a chance to sink in. Then Barry asked, "Why do you wear that ring?"

"Hit's ter kyore de cramp in de finger, boss. Leastways, hit's ter keep 'toff."

The arrival of Anthony and the blacksmith put a stop to the old man's talk. All three gave their attention to getting the rock out, and in a few minutes Barry was able to proceed on his journey, leaving the three generations of the colored race fingering fondly the coins he had given them for their trouble.

CHAPTER IX

OLD Guy's story had interested Barry so much that he kept thinking about it; and while he was riding along, lost in pleasant revery, he came to a place where the road branched off in two directions.

"Which is the main road, I wonder! Confound that man's stupid directions!" he muttered. But there was no one to ask, and after a moment of indecision he took the left road, leading through the long stretch of lowlands, when he should have taken the right, which followed close to the foot of the chain of little mountains.

There were no fences now, and the pines and white oaks on either side formed a dense forest, but the road was smooth and level. For quite a distance he met no one, and then he came upon a little negro, whose face was far too knowing for his size. Across his shoulders he carried a mail-bag, made of bedticking, and he rode bareback a big, blazed-face bay horse, which seemed to fall in very willingly with his rider's inclination to saunter along.

"Can you tell me how far it is to Mr. Pembroke's place?" Barry asked, pulling up his horse.

"Right smart ways, I spec'," was the satisfactory answer he received; and the little imp, chuckling to himself over the clever trick he had played, let him keep on in the wrong direction.

The road became more and more complicated, at times branching off in different directions, any one of which might have been the right one. At one place there was a crossroad with signs pointing one way to "Buck Island" and the other to "B. M." Barry, feeling sure that neither of these was the one he sought, continued as before.

Then he met a black-haired, ruddy-faced man on foot, traveling along at a brisk, cheerful pace. He was in his shirt-sleeves and wore a broad-brimmed straw hat, soiled dark blue overalls, and heavy brogans. His countenance was so kindly that Barry asked again: "Will you be good enough to tell me how far it is to Mr. Pembroke's?"

"Wh-wh-wh-wh—" he began, stammering desperately in his effort to ask, "Which Mr. Pembroke's?" He stopped, tried to compose himself, and then made another effort.

"Wh-wh-wh-wh—" he said again, gesticulating violently with his right hand, and cocking his eyes in his determination to get it out. After the third fruitless attempt, he burst out laughing.

"Go on," he said good-naturedly, "you'll get there before I can tell you."

The day was slipping by. Barry was satisfied

he had missed his way, but what was the use of changing his course in such a network of roads and paths?

It was quite late in the afternoon, when he heard the spirited barking of a small dog and the "Swow-w-w, swow-w—w" of a lash, accompanied by screams. He turned into the side path to see what was the matter and in few seconds found himself in sight of a cabin. Unobserved, he watched proceedings. In front of the cabin was a tub of clothes with one garment left well soaped on the washboard. At the farther end were active doings. A big negress, with sleeves rolled up and her bare arms still wet with suds, stood over a boy about fourteen years old, vigorously administering her black leather belt, which she had unstrapped for the purpose.

At the end nearest Barry were huddled three little "nigger gals," each saying, whenever there was a pause so she could be heard, "I 'haves myse'f—I 'haves myse'f."

"Davy," said the mother, "jes' es sho es my name is Judy Tibbs, I gwine break you o' your pisenous ways. I done spostulate an' spostulate all I gwine spostulate," and again she made the belt fly, and the boy yelled, "I gwine kill myse'f—I gwine kill myse'f de fus' chance I gits," and the fice-dog fairly jumped up off the ground in protest.

Then Judy stopped, mopped her brow, and looked around at the other children.

"I gwine beat evvy lars' one o' yer 'fo' I done. One sharn' larf at t'other," she said menacingly.

Barry rode nearer and called, "Hallo!"

When Judy turned around, surprised, he asked: "Why are you giving the boy such a beating?"

"I sont him ter de spring ter fetch a bucket o' water, an' when I ax him what mek he tek so long ter come back, he up an' call me a liar!" she answered, with passion still ringing in her voice.

However, curiosity got the upper hand of her, fortunately for Davy and the others, and she came forward to talk to the stranger, replacing her belt around her ample figure as she walked.

"Can you tell me how far I am from Mr. Pembroke's?" Barry asked, for the third time that day.

"Law, mister, you'se plum out o' yo' beat," Judy answered, with growing interest. "Mr. Pembroke lives mighty nigh twenty mile fum hyah. Dese is de Flatwoods, an' he live way up in de mountains. You'se mos' in Fluvanna now—you kin tell dat by all dese 'simmon trees."

"Is there any place near here where I could spend the night? To-morrow I should like to get your boy to show me the way," Barry said, trying to hide the disgust he felt for the whole situation.

"Yas, suh," Judy answered encouragingly, "Mrs. Sproggs live over dar behine dat thicket, an' I know she'll tek kyeer o' you. You Davy,

spry up dar an' show de gemman de way ter Mrs. Sproggs'."

Mrs. Sproggs' house stood on a ridge commanding an extensive outlook. When Barry rode up to explain his mission, a gray-haired woman, wearing a blue calico dress, came out on the porch, took off her "specs," and wiped them on one corner of her checked apron, while she stood, listening.

"Cert'n'ly," she said pleasantly, when she had taken in what he meant, "I'll tek kyeer o' you over night. Sech as I've got, you're kindly welcome to. Git right down an' come in. You Davy, tek the gent'man's horse round to the stable. You must be hongry," she continued, turning to the stranger, "goin' all day without anything t'eat. Come right in an' I'll fix you a snack."

She invited him into a large bedroom with many windows, wide open to the soft evening air.

"How fine to have so many windows," he said, trying to be polite, and taking the chair she offered—a rocker with an unshorn sheepskin bottom.

"Winders air nice," said Mrs. Sproggs, "but it teks a lot o' stuff ter make curtings enough ter go round," and then she disappeared into the next room, closing the door behind her.

"Now, isn't this the devil of a mix-up!" said Barry to himself. "Riding all day without dinner through this forlorn country, to find myself at night twenty miles from my destination!"

But he was a good-tempered fellow, and his

new experience appealed somewhat to the humorous side of his disposition. Everywhere there was evidence of the thrift of the housekeeper. A neat quilt of calico scraps, sewed carefully together, was spread on the bed, and the clean white pillowshams had "Sweet Sleep" and "Slumber" worked on them in red cotton; over the door hung the gun; a many-colored rag carpet covered the floor; chromos, representing Ruth and Naomi, and other Biblical scenes, hung upon the wall, and over the mantel were family photographs, one of which amused Barry very much. It was the picture of a young man and his wife, or sweetheart; the man was seated, his hat on the back of his head and a tremendous watchchain hanging from the upper buttonhole of his coat, while the stout young woman stood by him, one hand spread out on his shoulder.

When the "snack" was ready, Mrs. Sproggs asked Barry into the adjoining room, which served the double purpose of dining-room and kitchen, and invited him to be seated before a small square table covered with oilcloth. The "snack" consisted of bacon and fried eggs, hoecakes and hot coffee. Mrs. Sproggs talked as he ate.

"My ole man," she said, "is a cyarpenter, an' mos' ingen'ally he don' come home befo' dark, but he ken mek some arrange-ments about gittin' a horse fer Davy ter ride t'morrer, I reggin."

"I am greatly indebted to you, Mrs. Sproggs,

for helping me out of my difficulty," said Barry, overcome by the sense of obligation to the good woman for her kindness.

"Oh, it's no debt at all, suh—mister—what did you tell me your name was?"

"Burton."

"Mister Burton, me an' my ole man air always glad ter help in time o' trouble."

"You have a pretty view here, Mrs. Sproggs," said Barry, looking through the open door, to hide his amusement, far away across the hazy Flatwoods, which formed an unbroken line along the horizon.

"'Twould be a pretty view ef you jes' could see it, but them Paradise bushes an' that pile o' bresh destructs the view so's you can' see nothing hardly," she complained, indicating with her hand the dense growth of ailantus and a pile of sassafras she had been trying to induce her husband to remove at odd times.

It was not long before Mr. Sproggs came, and he lent his aid very willingly toward making "arrangements" for the morrow.

"Cert'n'y, cert'n'y," he said, as soon as the plan was unfolded to him, "I'll step right over an' borry Chap Gillispy's old mule fer Davy ter ride."

When it was all settled that Mr. Burton and Davy should make an early start the next morning, Mr. and Mrs. Sproggs sat quietly on their little

porch entertaining their unexpected guest. They brought out their pipes, filled with home-cured tobacco—Mrs. Sproggs explaining, “she had ter smoke on ‘count o’ the neuralgy”—and Mr. Burton, fortunately, had several cigars in his pocket. He offered one to Mr. Sproggs.

“No, thankee,” said that gentleman, “I tried one o’ them new-fangled ways o’ usin’ terbaccer oncet, but I never got no satisfaction out on it like smokin’ a corncob pipe.”

They all smoked on in silence for a while, evidently at a loss for a suitable topic of conversation; then Mr. Sproggs asked abruptly:

“Air you a member o’ the church?”

The suddenness of the question quite embarrassed the city-bred gentleman.

“Not exactly,” he was forced to admit; and then, as if suddenly recalling the incident, he continued, “I was christened in the Episcopal Church.”

“Wall,” replied Mr. Sproggs, thoughtfully, “I reggin that is better’n no church. I’m a hardshell Baptis’ mysef, an’ Sary Ann is a Methodis’, an’ we goes ter B. M. mighty nigh evvy Sunday ter meetin’. B. M. stan’s fer Baptis’ an’ Methodis’, you know.”

Barry did not know, but he did not admit his ignorance.

“Wus yo’ paw in the war?” asked Mr. Sproggs after another pause.

Now, if there was any subject in the world that thoroughly bored Barry, who believed in enjoying the present, regardless of the past or the future, it was the war—he would have been just as much entertained by accounts of the Flood—so he mildly answered, “No, sir,” and hoped that that would dismiss the subject.

Mr. Sproggs, however, did not realize that anybody could hold such benighted ideas as Barry’s, and he continued:

“I wus, from b’ginnin’ ter end. I was in Pickett’s charge at Gettysburg, an’ I jes’ wan’ tell yer that the worl’ ain’ never seed nothin’ like it befo’, an’ never will agin.”

Seeing that Mr. Sproggs was getting wrought up like a warhorse at the scent of battle, Mrs. Sproggs thought, before letting him continue further, it would be well to find out whether the stranger was a “Yankee” or not.

“Where is your home, Mr. Burton?” she asked, before her husband could begin a new sentence.

“New York City,” he replied, and thereupon all three smoked on in silence again.

After a while the old man said, “Sary Ann, it’s bedtime,” and, shaking the ashes out of his pipe, he escorted Barry up the narrow steps to the little bedroom above.

There was a single bed with pillowcase and sheets of clean unbleached cotton; a barrel, in

a skirt of flowered calico, served as a washstand, and upon it were placed a plain white bowl and pitcher, and there was also a soapdish containing a cake of turpentine soap. A little looking-glass in a black frame hung on the wall, and two clean towels, neatly folded, lay across the pitcher of water.

For the first time in his whole life Barry had been brought face to face, as man to man, with fellow-creatures of another class than his own; and, though he was too superficial seriously to consider the many different phases of life, he was at least grateful for the goodwill with which the rural hospitality had been accorded. Congratulating himself that it was no worse, he went to sleep.

CHAPTER X

BRIGHT and early the next morning Mr. Sproggs called Barry, and invited him down to breakfast. Davy was ready with his mule, and Barry's horse stood tied at the gate of the little yard, when the time came for him to say good-by. He had intended to offer payment for his night's lodging, but, when he remembered with what cordial goodwill it had been tendered, he dismissed such an idea at once, and made up his mind to send from New York such presents as he hoped would prove acceptable.

He and Davy journeyed toward the mountains by ways that seemed to him unnecessarily circuitous; finally, worn out with long riding, they emerged from the lowlands and struck the main road which he had lost the day before. Then Davy stopped short.

"I cyarn' go no furder wid you," he said. "Dat's Mr. Pembroke's over dar on dat hill. He's got a mighty bad dawg, an' I ain' gwine dar, cus I heerd dat he might nigh took a man las' week dat rid up dar onbeknownst to 'em."

He could be prevailed upon to go no farther, so Barry gave him a bright silver dollar, and left him expressing his delighted thanks.

It seemed to Barry that it would be undignified to "holler," as Davy had advised him to do, when approaching the house, which he now recognized from the liveryman's description; and it was with the uncertain feeling of being pounced upon at any moment by the great, vicious dog that he rode up to the front gate.

From the beginning of his wooing expedition Barry had been in a very satisfied frame of mind. He thought of his good looks, his social position, his means, and the many advantages which any sane girl like Betty—whose lot had been cast so far in obscurity—would see in exchanging her secluded position to become the wife of such a popular club man and all-round good fellow.

He had mentally pictured his home on Fifth Avenue, his horses and traps, his dinners and other social functions; and he thought of how stunning Betty would look when he introduced her as his wife, of how skillfully she would handle the ribbons and how superbly she would ride, of how charmingly she would preside at his table and how graciously she would greet his friends—this rare, wonderful flower that he proposed to remove from these green fields and transplant to a more congenial soil. He determined not to let her postpone the wedding later than the autumn at farthest, and in his flights of imagination he even selected the crowd he would bring down on a private car to help celebrate the happy event. Get-

ting lost in the Flatwoods had taken some of the starch out of his self-confidence, as well as out of his linen. He was uncomfortably conscious that he was far from presenting his usual immaculate appearance, and he feared to see in Betty's eyes the gleam of amusement with which she instantly recognized a ludicrous situation. Then, too, he had no relish for a rencontre with her father's bulldog, as an introduction to the family.

When he stopped at the gate, hesitating whether to dismount or not, he heard the rattle of a chain and a low growl from the neighborhood of the front porch. Just then Betty came out from her seat among the lilac bushes in the northern corner of the yard, calling, "Dan, come here, sir." Taking the huge brindled animal by his chain she fastened him to a tree, where he continued to growl uneasily.

Dan knew all of the country beaux, and was on good terms with them; so Betty, surmising that the horseman was a stranger, was about to go into the house, when a second glance convinced her it was no other than Barry Burton, arriving unexpectedly at this early hour at the gate of The Oaks.

As she went down the walk to meet him, Aunt Lucy watched from behind the parlor window-blinds, to see what the newcomer looked like.

"He's gwine way wid his walkin'-papers 'bout t'morrow or nex' day, jes' like all de res' of 'em

does," she said to herself, as she saw him jump down from his horse and shake hands eagerly with Betty. "Wonder ef Miss Betty ever is gwine git married? She gived him dat same perlite handshake dat dee all gits. Nor, suh, he 'ain' de right one yit; but grate goodness! he cert'n'y is good-lookin' an' stylish an' citified," she added, as she beat a hasty retreat, for she had already lingered through intense curiosity till they were fairly on the front porch steps.

Now that Dan was securely tied, Barry was enchanted with the outlook; the sweet old Virginia home and the simplicity of the life to which Betty's informal reception opened the door were most inviting.

She herself looked as fresh and sweet and lovely as the June morning, in her simple white dress and light hat, trimmed with a great bunch of violets. When she met him she had her whip and gloves in her hand, and was evidently ready to take a drive.

"I am glad to see you," she said cordially. "I've just been waiting for my trap to come around to take me to the Sunday-school convention at the Cherry Hill Church, and it will be pleasant to have you go with me."

When they reached the door of the library, she called to her mother, who was writing at the desk: "Mamma, here is Mr. Burton, Cousin John's friend. I want you to meet him before we go

over to Cherry Hill." The neighborhood people always spoke of the church as "Cherry Hill." The post-office of the same name was spoken of simply as "the post-office."

Mrs. Pembroke came forward and greeted Barry with the warmth and graciousness which mark the true Virginia hostess. She invited him to spend some time with them, and offered to send over to town for the baggage he had left. Altogether, she was so genuinely hospitable and so genial that Barry was charmed, and, as he gratefully accepted, he decided in his own mind that middle age with such a lady was nothing unpleasant to look forward to; he had not failed to note the resemblance between mother and daughter.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN the trap came around, Aunt Lucy brought out a great lunch-basket for them to take with them.

"You see, it is going to be an all-day affair," Betty explained, "and as I play the organ I must be there the whole time. I hope you won't be bored to death." The mischievous twinkle which Barry had always found charming shone in her eyes; she was already picturing to herself how out of place he would seem at Cherry Hill. The Cherry Hill church was just a quarter of a mile from the Cherry Hill post-office, on the road that branched off from the main road and led to the Flatwoods.

"I would rather stay at home with you," he frankly admitted, as she gathered up the lines, and her little sorrel mare started off in a brisk trot.

The drive to church was delightful. He concluded he could stay on indefinitely at The Oaks, and enjoy himself, too, though so far from all he had hitherto considered essential to his happiness.

"Now, don't expect to see a swell church, with stained-glass windows and pipe organ, and a stylish crowd noticing each other's fine clothes; for if you do you'll be disappointed," Betty had warned him before they came in sight of Cherry Hill, and

yet Barry was not quite prepared for what he did see.

The road was lined with people on their way to the meeting—in carriages, in buggies, in wagons, on horseback, and afoot. There were descendants of the English aristocrats, of the Hessians who had been among Burgoyne's troops, which were captured in New York and quartered at Colle; of the Italians whom Jefferson had brought over to tend his vineyards; of the Welsh who had come to work in the slate quarries; and of the "poor whites," whose origin seemed buried in utter oblivion. The nomenclature of the neighborhood was, consequently, as varied as were the natural gifts of body and mind which had been bequeathed from generation to generation.

When they came in sight of Cherry Hill, Barry saw a great, plain frame building, painted tan, with brown doors and windows, all giving evidence of the hard struggle with the elements which had been going on for years. The churchyard was full of wild cherry trees, and beyond the edge of it the stately pines of the forest sighed and moaned whenever there was breeze enough to disturb their repose. Already the yard was full of vehicles, the horses were hitched to every available tree, and gay groups were scattered here and there, giving a look of life to the place, which was usually bleak and dreary and desolate enough to make the cheeriest heart sad, except during the one sea-

son of the year when the joyous wealth of blossoms more than made amends for the utter homeliness of the style of architecture.

Betty was respectfully saluted on all sides, and when she and Barry alighted from the trap there were many willing hands ready to unhook and tie the fiery Bird. While this was being done, he stood in front of the church waiting for her, as she had joined a group near by to ask questions about the hymns and general arrangements for the day.

Several young countrymen were sitting idly on the steps awaiting further developments. Barry saw one nudge another and whisper, and then heard him say in a low drawl:

"Say, Bill, ain't yer glad yer ain't no darn city dyude, but jes' a plain Virginyar clodhopper that ken onhitch an' tie a horse yo'self?"

Barry was at once uncomfortably conscious that he wore a derby hat, a fancy waistcoat, light-colored riding-breeches, and very gaudy-looking tan boots.

When Betty rejoined him, they went into the church and up the left aisle to the little organ in the "amen corner," facing the congregation. The benches behind were reserved for the choir, which was led by a big happy-looking man with a stentorian voice, who, Betty whispered, was a florist from town.

The crowd was still collecting when the assist-

ant superintendent, who had been sitting by a table in front of the pulpit, arose and announced that, as the general county superintendent had been detained at home on account of sickness, he himself had been appointed to preside as chairman; and, as the hour was already late, he moved to open the convention by singing the long-meter doxology, beginning "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

From his prominent position in the choir Barry could watch all that was going on. After the doxology the presiding officer asked a gentleman who sat on the other side of the table from himself to lead in prayer.

Betty again whispered, "That is my Uncle Archie Terrell—he is the superintendent of the Cherry Hill Sunday-school."

Major Terrell, whose gentle face was a benediction in itself, knelt in front of the little chair, and prayed:

"O Lord, I beseech Thee to watch over all the Sunday-schools whose representatives are with us to-day, and enable them to do fully the work in Thy cause, which rests upon them as a sacred responsibility. Let them realize that it is Thy will that *all* men shall be drawn unto Thee; and let them look to Thee continually for guidance and help, when, in their ignorance, they fail to render their full duty in bringing Thy children to Thy feet.

"In particular do I beseech Thee, O Father, to watch over those in each community who never enter the doors of Thy houses of worship. It is for them, wandering far from the shelter of Thy redeeming love, that my heart bleeds to-day; for I have been among them, I know the sadness and gloom which hang over their souls in the hours of their adversity, and I would that in our humility we could learn how to lead them to Thee, the Comforter, the Great Stay to those who suffer and weep. O God, wilt Thou touch the hearts of those who are out in this darkness. Wilt Thou let them realize that, while they enjoy the blessings Thou hast so bountifully bestowed upon them, there are solemn duties which they owe to man and to Thee.

"O God, it is for the sinner that I plead this morning; for the man who, when his pathway is strewn with flowers, knows not the sweetness of Thy mercy; for the man who knows not where to turn when trouble falls upon him; for the man who knows not what it is to pray and to feel that the prayer is heard; for the man who looks upon the Great Beyond as a dark abyss which finally awaits him, or, at best, believes the end is in the grave. O Most High, we know that there must come to each and every one of us some solemn moment when we shall realize that we are alone with Thee. Wilt Thou then let Thy presence be felt unmistakably. Wilt Thou let the

material misgivings of this human fearfulness make way for the spiritual certainty of Thy glorious promises. Wilt Thou let that certainty enable us to lead all who are wandering in the wilderness of life to that door which will be so freely opened to all who knock. Wilt Thou give us faith, abundant, overflowing, overwhelming—faith, which will sustain us through all the trials of this uncertain life and through all the shadows of the mystery of death—a faith which will take us safely into Thy home above. And all we ask is in Christ the Redeemer's name. Amen."

There was more pleading in the tone of the voice than in the mere words—it seemed that when he closed his eyes to this world he had opened them to the next; and when he paused, now and then, fervent "Ay-a-mans" were heard from many of the bowed heads among the congregation. Then there was another hymn, and the church and forest rang with "Christ Receiveth Sinful Men." Barry wondered if they meant anything personal.

The novelty of it all kept him entertained for a while. He listened to speeches and reports from the superintendent of first one Sunday-school and then another, leaning over to ask Betty questions occasionally, till, finally, the superintendent of the Poorhouse Sunday-school rose to make the address that was promised from him on the programme.

This speech was the sensation of the day.

The speaker came forward to within a few feet of where Barry sat. He was a thin, stoop-shouldered man, neatly dressed, with a face wrinkled in plaids, and a mouth that had a determined set at the corners. He stood still for a minute, folding his arms tightly across his chest, and then he began:

"Captain Vowles, the county superintendent, has been after me every year to make a speech before the convention, but I've always told him to find a better man for the job. This time he wouldn't let me off, and I'm sorry he is not here to hear me. [A pause.] For if he were here he would never ask me to speak again. I am nothing of a speaker, but I have all the Sunday-school work deep at heart—yes, deep at heart.

"I have listened to all the speeches to-day with profound interest—all about the little poor children in the Ragged Mountains, and the little poor children in the Flatwoods, and the little poor children in Shiflett's Hollow, and the little poor children everywhere. [A pause.] The little poor children are certainly worth trying to save, and I am greatly interested in that work; but I am going to talk to you to-day about the little rich children and their needs—yes, the children of the wealthy, the learned, and the aristocratic.

"The other day I happened to have some business at the house of one of our most learned men, and one of his little girls heard me say I was

going to a Sunday-school picnic. 'Oh,' said she, 'what are you going to that stupid old thing for? Why don't you go where you can have some fun?' Now that shows the kind of bringing up she's had. Anything to do with the church is stupid, poky—she must have some kind of excitement to amuse her.

"Not long ago I asked a society lady in our neighborhood to send her children to Sunday-school. She said, 'I don't care to send my children where they'll be mixed up with all kinds of children. Sunday-schools are good enough for some classes, but I prefer to teach my children at home.' The Sunday-schools are good enough for *your* children and good enough for *my* children, but they are not good enough for *her* children. What does all this mean? Does the Bible teach that special dispensations will be made for the upper classes? Do they expect to find a private entrance into the heavenly kingdom?

"Now, it is 'influence' that I am asked to talk about to-day. When I made up my mind what I was going to say, I asked a brother superintendent about it, and he said, 'Yes, you are right, it ought to be said—but *be very careful how you say it.*' It ought to be said, and *I will say it.* I want to tell you this: When the poor man in the Ragged Mountains takes his line and goes fishing on Sunday, I don't say it is right; but I do say that people don't look to him to set the pace for

them to live by, and his influence is very, very slight—lost in the great, quiet, shady woods with nobody to heed or notice. But when the wealthy, the learned, and the aristocratic sit in their club-windows of a Sunday morning during meeting hours, when passers-by hear the sounds that tell the story of pool and billiards, when reeling swells are sent home in their carriages, I *do* say that it is not right, for they are not only doing harm themselves, but the poor, the plebeian, and the illiterate look to them for example, and their influence is as powerful as it is evil.

“When ladies of high degree go to public places and sip their cocktails, use strong language, and smoke cigarettes, it is time for us to stop and think. Look back over the history of all the peoples of the world—think of Babylon in Belshazzar’s time, of Alexandria in Hypatia’s time, of Rome under Nero, of England under Charles II., and of others too numerous to name—can it be possible that we, too, are drifting to such a period of profligacy? It is easy to take the first step in the downward direction; it is also easy in the beginning to retrace that step, if we make up our minds to do it—but when the very bottom of the pit has been reached the ascent seems almost impossible. Let us take warning and retrace our steps while we may. I shall not dwell on this subject, though it has caused me great thought, great pain, great sorrow. The influence of one

single member of what is called the society class, I firmly believe, has more weight than the whole of Ragged Mountains, Flatwoods, and Shiflett's Hollow combined. Then awake, you men and women of that society class, to your solemn responsibilities, and see to it that no one of you spends that influence in wrongdoing that may lead to infamy. See to it that the little rich children are brought up in the fear of the Lord. Their influence will wield untold power for good or for bad. Let it be for *good*."

He jerked his arms asunder in the intensity of his feelings, and returned to his seat, unconscious that he had in a few words given Barry more food for thought than he ever had had before in his life.

Stealing a look at Betty's face, Barry wondered whether it would have worn the same sweet expression had she been brought up in the same atmosphere in which he had spent the whole of his life. He was beginning to learn something outside of the conventional routine to which he had always been accustomed.

The dinner was spread on rude tables, temporarily put up for the occasion, water and lemonade were served from large barrels, and even during the services children made frequent visits to a big tin bucket and refreshed themselves out of the tin dipper.

The afternoon hung heavily on Barry, who

wearied of the long-drawn-out speeches, and particularly of one little preacher who had an irrepressible tendency to have something to say on every subject that arose. Barry had not yet learned to possess his soul in patience, and to regard charitably the short-comings of his fellow-beings. With Betty it was different. She smiled good-humoredly, and inwardly compared the preacher to a fussy little dog that couldn't be kept quiet.

When at last the meeting was over and the crowd were dispersing, Betty took Barry for a drive; and Bird held up her head and went along with a will, for the excitement had been hard on her nerves, too.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN they reached The Oaks, several of the neighborhood beaux were already there, and, as they stayed to supper, Barry wondered if they ever intended to go home. He talked to Mrs. Pembroke dutifully, and the most humorous of the country swains jokingly remarked to Betty:

"That city beau of yours is trying the plan of chaffing the cow to catch the calf."

As the evening went on, Betty tired of singing and playing the piano for the amusement of the crowd, and suggested ghost stories. They all gathered together on the front porch, lowered the lights in the hall, and trusted to the pale moonlight for ghostly inspiration.

"Now, Bob, as a beginning, tell about your experience at Cherry Hill the night of the terrible storm," suggested one of the party, knowing that if Bob Lewis once commenced there would not be time for another tale that night.

The shadows fell softly, Dan gave his chain an occasional gentle shake, and the tinkling of distant cow-bells wooed Bob to break the silence that had fallen upon the expectant crowd, which listened intently when he began:

"One of the hottest days last summer I had to

go down to Fluvanna on business. I got up at day-break, got my breakfast, and after steady riding reached Palmyra, the county seat, about ten o'clock. I saw the people about the little law matter, and after it had all been settled set out for home, hoping to get back before dark. I had never been much down in the flat country, and that accounts for my not being able to understand the weather signs that day. Then, too, ever since I went down there many years ago on a 'coon hunt with a big, black, good-natured negro named Price White, who used to work on our farm when I was a boy, I can't help an unaccountable, uncomfortable feeling that will come back whenever I think of the stories he told me that night about 'panthers,' as he called them. He declared that they lived in the trees, and that they fooled you by crying like babies; that they could spring like cats, and could jump on you, because they could see with their fierce, fiery eyes, even in the dark. I remember I clung to Price's coat tails that night, and, even now, whenever I travel alone through the Flatwoods, I have a feeling that I should still like to have somebody's coat tails to hold on to. And the Metlow murder—which happened when we were children, as you all know—gave me less taste for riding through those dreary woods alone.

"That evening, coming home from Fluvanna, I seemed unusually on the alert for danger. Every time a twig broke or a woodpecker made a noise

I started in the saddle, and felt excitedly for my pistol. My horse seemed in the same mood, too, pricking up his ears, stepping along gingerly, and occasionally jumping from one side of the road to the other, as if he had seen something awful hiding in the bushes.

"This was just before I got up to the Metlow house, and the nearer we came to it the greater became my uneasiness—and the horse's. I couldn't think of anything but that dark, fearful night when those two good old people, sitting innocently by their fireside, were called to the cellar door by a knock; of the awful deed that followed that knock, and how it had aroused the neighborhood as nothing else had ever aroused it; of the cold-blooded murderers who could thus slaughter two old people for money; of the weird story that a woman watched the house while the horror was being perpetrated; of the cross-examining of the suspected parties at the house the next day, when the mangled bodies—shrouded by the very woman who was supposed to have watched the house—lay ready for burial; of how dark tales were whispered about the murderer, who was lurking in our midst, liable to come upon us at any moment, brandishing a bloody ax and threatening the entire population; of how women and children were terrified to the extent that they stayed at home behind locked doors and barred windows, while the men scoured the country for the evil-doer.

This had always been a peaceful community till then, and a deed so awful had made an impression upon me that the years couldn't change.

"I thought, too, of the murderers lying in the old people's icehouse all the day before the murder to watch the house, and I remembered that there were places in the straw showing that *two* men had been there. Only one was ever caught, and I wondered if somebody were lying somewhere then, watching for something, and the horse had got wind of it.

"Then I thought of the night when I, a small boy, lay sleeping peacefully save for an occasional bad dream, and in the stillness of the midnight hour hundreds of men from every part of the county rode quietly but determinedly to the jail, and demanded and secured the prisoner; then I thought of the time I had passed the tree where they hanged him, and of another time when I had gone to the Metlow house and had seen the bloodstains on the wall—bloodstains which no white-wash could ever hide. My heart was beating excitedly, and great beads of cold perspiration were on my brow, when we came in sight of the haunted house—not haunted, indeed, by the spirits of the departed dead, but by the memories of the wickedness done by the hand of man. I tried to think of something else, but I couldn't.

"Just as we were passing the house, a loud peal of thunder made me almost jump out of the sad-

dle. My horse shied, and I came near being thrown. I had not noticed the gathering darkness, but doubtless both the horse and I had been affected by the approaching storm. I passed a cabin, and as I did so two little red-headed, freckle-faced boys came running around the corner, shouting to the long, lean, lank woman who stuck her head out of the door, looking about with anxious eyes, 'Mammy, don't yer hear them clouds a-rolling?' 'ing?'

"In a moment she, terrified, was running across the rough field to a neighbor's, the boys hurrying at her heels. I pushed ahead, hoping to reach Cherry Hill before the storm set in in earnest. Two old negro men, with brand new 'barskets' on their backs, were just ahead of me; as I neared them, one said to the other:

" 'Milton, I knowed dis ve'y mawnin' we wus gwine hev weather 'fo' night. I seed a cat lickin' her paws an' washin' her face—dat's a sho sign.'

" 'Dat's right, Monroe, an' what's mo' I heerd a owl hoot arfter sunup—dat ain' never fail ter bring weather,' the other answered.

"Peal after peal of thunder shook the very universe, and it was growing darker every moment. Presently the rain began to fall in great drops. I urged my horse on, but by the time I reached the churchyard it was coming down in sheets, and the wind was shrieking fiercely. It was pitch dark. I unsaddled my horse and tied him to a small

cherry tree—the flashing of the lightning showed me the way—and then I unfastened the door of the church. Utterly exhausted, I dropped the saddle and sank on the first bench.

“The storm outside seemed to be tearing the world to pieces. Amidst the crash—crash—of falling pines, and with the assistance of the lightning that came every other moment, a fearful thing was revealed to me. Did my eyes deceive me—could it be the result of my wrought-up imagination for the past couple of hours? Another flash! My eyes had seen only too truly!

“Standing in the pulpit, with arms outstretched as if exhorting an erring congregation, stood a woman—or what looked like a woman—with long, flowing hair, clad in a loose white robe.

“‘Merciful Heavens, what is it?’ I thought, ‘and will she stay where she is?’ The next flash of lightning showed she was about to descend from the pulpit on my side of the church—the next that she was in the aisle! I was crazy with terror—I could see she was gliding nearer and nearer, making a few steps every time there was light. She had almost reached me. I rushed from the church out into the storm, with the woman, or apparition, after me, and I ran with all the swiftness that fright gives a man—on—on—I knew not whither. I covered space furiously, but whenever I dared look back she was right at me, arms outstretched, almost touching me. I didn’t seem to

gain on her a bit. I felt myself growing weaker—weaker—and only desperation kept me from falling. Over logs, stumps, through bushes we struggled, till, at last, ready to drop, I fell against the door of a negro's cabin. It flew open, and a merciful darkness hid the terrifying vision from my sight."

There was a sigh of relief at his narrow escape.

"Bob, what in the world was it?" Betty asked.

"It was a poor, demented old woman, who had gotten away from her nurses, and had hidden in the church."

The big clock in the hall struck eleven—slowly, deliberately. The callers rose to go, and, after what seemed to Barry an interminable time spent in leavetakings, they rode away in the moonlight.

Barry was distinctly piqued as he realized that here, in the depths of the country, he was to have as few opportunities of seeing Betty alone as he had had in New York during the gay season. He retired to his room just a little out of heart. He thought of her and of the ghost story, and tried to chase away another thought—of the Metlow murder, which had been committed so near where he was to sleep.

Bob rode up to his barn and put away his horse, still pursued by one unwelcome thought—would Betty accept the handsome city suitor?

While the young men thought of her daughter so fondly, Mrs. Pembroke also had her reflections

before sleep came to her. Her mind went back to the time when she had become the bride of the man whom she had imagined she loved. She was very, very young at the time of her marriage, and, although she did not realize it then, it afterward came to her that she had not known the meaning of love. She thought of her bridegroom, whose handsome face and Chesterfieldian manners had wooed and won her unsuspecting heart; of how she had fancied him the type of splendid manhood; of how he had always been spoken of as the best-looking of all the good-looking Pembrokes; of how fascinating he had seemed to her, and of her promise of happiness. She thought of the few happy months after they were married, then of the dark days when he began staying away from home—and, when he did come, his sad plight! She thought of her first realization of the gloomy life that lay before her. She had borne her cross bravely for the sake of her child; but, through the long intervening years, who could fathom the depths of the grief which had been hers—hers, whose life might have been so different?

Many a lonely hour she had spent in that great house, listening to the mournful wind sighing through the tall oaks; her life had been full of shadows and pathetic longings, till her child's glad spirit had chased away the clouds, and had given her something to live for. Now the time had

come when that child might make just such a false step as she had made; and on her knees she had prayed God to keep and protect her from all harm. Knowing the world as she had grown to know it, she knew that she would like to see Betty marry a man who had thought something of the serious side of life, who not only could work but would work, who knew his place in the ranks of God's great army, and who never deserted his post. She knew it would be safer for a girl to marry Bob, who had proved himself a dutiful son and faithful friend, rather than a man whose chief thought was of his own importance in the world, of his good looks, and his comfortable bank account. It was in this way that Barry had impressed her.

Betty, however, fell asleep instantly. It was neither Barry's image nor Bob's that came before her eyes unbidden, when she closed them, and helped her over all the troubled places of her dreamland. She thought of Ralph Redwood, and wondered what sorrow lay behind the serious expression of his face. She wondered if the "other man"—the awful dream-man—could ever have caused him any trouble.

CHAPTER XIII

BARRY happened to strike a busy week in the Cherry Hill neighborhood. The county horse show was to follow close on the heels of the Sunday-school Convention, so he telegraphed to have his crack hunter sent on, and looked forward with interest to the approaching event.

The day before the show Alice Stephenson and Henry Harvey came over to The Oaks, and "horse" was king of the conversation for the day. Alice had entered Ben Bolt in every class she could, and Henry had a string of horses he expected to show.

"I am doubtful about Bird," Betty admitted; "I am sure of her action and conformation—I don't believe there ever was a more perfect piece of horseflesh—but I am sometimes uncertain about the lady's manners, particularly when there is a crowd about."

"She was quite restless after the convention the other day," Barry suggested.

"Send her over anyway," Henry urged; "she may surprise you by her good behavior."

So the restless little mare and Ben Bolt were sent over that afternoon to the grounds, which were quite a distance beyond The Oaks, and it was arranged for Henry to take all the crowd over the

next day to the show in his coach, as he said he could easily gather them up as he came along from Brookwood.

Early the next morning, when the air was fragrant with the odor of grapevine and other delicious growing things, Betty and Barry sat on the front porch at The Oaks all ready and waiting. A long linen coat quite concealed Betty's riding-habit, her white riding-hat was securely fastened on, and her tan boots were barely perceptible when, every now and then, she walked to the edge of the porch to look westward to the thicket through which the road ran, at the edge of which she would catch the first sight of the coach. She was impatient to start.

Her Uncle Archie's buggy came in sight first. He waved his handkerchief to her, and called from the road:

"You'll be late, if you don't mind."

Then Bob Lewis and his little sister Nellie drove by, and Betty began to wish she had made Gilbert hitch up his roans and take her and Barry over in the carriage. At last the welcome sound of a coachman's horn was wafted from the direction of the thicket, then the coach-and-four came suddenly in sight, moving briskly along the road till it reached the outer gate of The Oaks. The wheelers were heavy bays, and the leaders were a pair of game thoroughbreds, all matching in color and pulling together in the free way that was the pride

of their owner. It was a fine sight as they came up the driveway. Barry knew a great deal about appointments, and something about horses.

"It is a blue-ribbon winner," he declared, showing more enthusiasm than Betty had believed he possessed.

Alice, radiant with pleasure and expectation, and glorious in her dark beauty, was on the front seat with Henry. She, like Betty, was attired in the severely plain riding-costume, which was so becoming to the regular features of both. Mr. and Mrs. Harvey, handsome and white-haired, quiet and elegant in manner and appearance, were "characterized," as the ready-made clothing catalogues would say, by the neatness of their gray costumes. They occupied the middle seat with Mrs. Stephenson, who was magnificent in a lilac silk coat, with a stunning little bonnet to match. The "Queen of Sheba," "Lady Brookwood," or "Duchess of Sweetbriar," as she was variously called, was large and handsome, with white hair and bright blue eyes.

"Aren't you going with us?" she called gayly to Mrs. Pembroke, who had come out on the porch, not dressed for traveling, but wearing a white dress and a lavender ribbon at her throat.

"No; I'm not like my brother." Major Terrell was noted for his love of horses, and was still a great rider. "I don't care at all for horses," she continued, "and crowds tire me."

"Uncle Archie and I have all the sporting blood in the family, Mrs. Stephenson. Mamma can't tell a horse from a cow. It bores her to death to hear people talk 'horse,'" Betty laughed, as she and Barry climbed up on the back seat, after Aunt Lucy, overcome with admiration for the grand turnout, had put in a couple of baskets.

"Your riding things is in de big one," she explained to Betty, aside; "de lunch is in de tother one." Aunt Lucy was evidently excited, for of course Betty knew the difference between her basket-trunk and the lunch-basket.

Then the coach finished the circle around the beds of roses that were blooming in all their June assurance, as if to say, "We'd just like to see the person that could keep us from being splendid this time of the year!"

The coach rolled out of the gate at The Oaks and sped along over the red roads, crossing now and then small, inoffensive creeks, and kept following the direction parallel with the foot of the mountain, till, finally, Barry pointed out to Betty the place where he had lost his way the first day he came; then in a little while they climbed the mountain and passed the gate of Monticello.

When they reached the town the street cars were packed with people; all humanity seemed bound in one direction, and when they went on toward the show grounds they met horses and colts being led home with their ribbons fastened

on their halters. The show had commenced, and several of the least interesting classes had been judged.

The day promised to be a great success—there were classes for everything that goes to make up a good open-air horse show. The grand stand was packed, the boxes looked gay in the rich luster of glad attire, people hung around the enclosures in throngs, and the performances were being watched with keen interest. Manners, action, conformation, appointments—all were being duly discussed, and surprise was invariably expressed by some, no matter what the decision of the judges.

Bob Lewis stopped to speak to them as they drove into the grounds, and to show Henry Harvey where he would find room for his coach.

The sportsman element was out in full force—large parties had come from all points of the State. It was like a great holiday. The crowds of people assembled were exchanging pleasantries, and every available space around the ring was occupied by vehicles of high and low degree, from the pretentious coach-and-four down to the humblest wagon in the county.

It was, indeed, a horse show right in the midst of a horse-loving people.

When the English forefathers settled Virginia, where all conditions of scenery, forest, and game were favorable to their manner of living, saddle horses and dogs were among the luxuries consid-

ered indispensable; wherever there was a dwelling for man, a stable and a kennel were to be found. Fox-hunting was among the earliest sports, and in this new country, where nature was still undisturbed, it required bold and skillful horsemanship to follow the hounds.

As a matter of fact, the settlement at Jamestown had scarcely been effected when an importation of horses was made in 1609. Virginia, the "mother of States and statesmen," was also the mother of horses and horsemen. Valuable thoroughbreds were constantly imported, and the State became filled with the finest English stock. Later, General Washington owned a stable of race horses, and John Randolph of Roanoke did not think it beneath his dignity to ride his own horse in a match race with Sir John Nesbitt, deeming that "unsullied honor and integrity of heart are compatible with the appellation of a generous sportsman."

Virginia was that day once more like a flower putting forth in springtime, after the long and dreary winter of poverty and want, and with the return of prosperity had come again that love for "the sport of kings," which had been dormant, not dead. Her sons, who had been forced to go away to seek their fortunes when her impoverished condition rendered hopeless any chance of success at home, had come back to bring their wealth and pour it into the lap of the mother they

loved so well. The old State had "cast her bread upon the waters," and after many days it had returned to her.

Barry, after assuring himself that his hunter had arrived in good shape, joined the party at the boxes which Henry Harvey had secured for them. Henry felt well satisfied with himself, with his horses, and last, but by no means least, with his sweetheart. He was engaged. What more could any man ask who was not in the secret Alice had confided to Betty?

But Barry was not so sure of his position—this was evident from the restlessness of his manner toward Betty. He was not used to being treated with the cool politeness which she had always accorded him. At home he was considered a most desirable catch by mammas with marriageable daughters, but he could not even guess what his chances were with Betty. The doubt made him eagerly anxious to win the high jump that day, as he thought it would be a great step toward gaining her approval.

The climax of the day was to be reached in that high jump. It was to be the last class, so that it would hold the crowd and keep it expectant. Henry had a horse in it, and there were several other competitors, the most formidable of whom was Bob Lewis, who had entered Birdcatcher.

The first class that interested the Cherry Hill crowd was the Green Hunters, and both Barry and

Henry were struck with the fine horseflesh, good riding, and poor appointments. A big chestnut colt that belonged to Bob Lewis bore off the blue ribbon.

Then came the Ladies' Park saddlers. Betty and Alice both rode. It was hard for the grand stand to decide between the two; the other competitors were not worthy of notice in comparison. "The dark girl on the gray, or the brown-haired girl on the little chestnut? It's between the two," agreed the crowd, looking over their programmes to see who they were. Bird and Ben Bolt did well; they walked, trotted, cantered, cut the figure eight, and in the summing up the judges gave the blue ribbon to the neatly turned little thoroughbred Bird, on account of her conformation.

"I wish Henry hadn't been so smart as to advise you to bring her over. Her manners have been fine," Alice laughed, as they rode out of the ring together.

"You never can count on her. I've had to talk to her all the time to keep her quiet," Betty answered.

Then there was a pony class, and afterward several tandems were shown. Bird and Ben Bolt showed up well in the Ladies' Hunter Class, winning the blue and the red again, and then Betty and Alice took them over the hurdles abreast. Alice went at the hurdles with reckless dash, but Ben Bolt was, fortunately, level-headed. Betty,

however, had to keep a cool head and manage her small but high-spirited mare with consummate tact and skill.

Henry won a ribbon or two, Bob Lewis' riding was marvelous, and his Birdcatcher won in every class in which he was entered. Birdcatcher was well known at the various horse shows, and was the grand stand favorite. Bob had been a faithful student of "Stonehenge's British Rural Sports, Illustrated," ever since he was a small boy, when it was the most delicious stolen fruit he ever tasted. His father prized the book, and forbade the children's reading it, thereby causing disobedience in his family.

When there was an intermission for lunch, and they all gathered around Henry's coach, Barry at last got an opportunity to talk to Betty.

"I've watched every class with interest," he assured her, "and I'm beginning to feel confident of winning the high jump. Birdcatcher is the only horse here as good as mine, and young Lewis is at least twenty pounds heavier than I am. That will count against him tremendously."

"Don't build your hopes too high," she replied, looking at him with a queer expression in her lovely violet eyes, and trying to control a look of mischief that would assert itself about her mouth. He wondered at this discouraging remark, and made up his mind that she had had some inside tip. He kept thinking, "What does she mean?"

After lunch followed a variety of classes. Finally the four-in-hands took the ring. They were magnificent to look upon as they went round and round, now barely escaping collision, now skimming past one another, as the horses responded to the skillful handling of the lines. The inexperienced wondered how it was possible for so many reins to be manipulated with one hand, which good form demanded. Henry had to yield the palm to the showy chestnuts that belonged to a clever whip who did some fancy driving that won the grand stand.

Next came the Hunt Teams, and the Cherry Hill team was well represented by Betty on Bird, Bob on Birdcatcher, and her Uncle Archie, the veteran sportsman, on a stunning black horse whose pedigree was the best in the county. The black riding-habits of the ladies—Betty's had been carefully packed by Aunt Lucy and she had been glad to change into it from her white linen, which was soiled with the red clay—the pink coats of the men, the sleekness of well-groomed horses, made this a particularly pretty class, and the applause it won was tremendous. Henry's box hand-clapped vigorously as the Cherry Hill team took hurdle after hurdle, adding fresh laurels to the neighborhood's already enviable record.

Before noon a shower had changed the aspect of the day, and the gathering clouds made it seem very late when the last class was called. Everybody was worked up to the highest pitch of ex-

pectation; the great event of the day was at last at hand.

The grand stand faced the mountains, which at one point sloped down into a long hillside, and there, away beyond the entrance gate, was the direction to look for rain. Back behind the stand the clouds in the west passed fitfully over the waning sun as, one by one, four horsemen rode into the ring and lined up near the judges' stand: Henry, on a big roan; Barry, on his chustnut, a showy animal with white stockings and a big blaze in his face; a stranger, whom Betty called Don Quixote on account of his appearance; and Bob—not on Birdcatcher, as every one had expected, but on a brown colt he had but recently broken. The gate still stood open. When a moment later, Nellie Lewis—Bob's tow-headed dare-devil little sister—came riding in on the famous Birdcatcher, they were welcomed with throat-splitting cheers. Birdcatcher moved with long, sweeping strides, and the crowd looked on with pleasure at the grace and ease with which he covered the ground.

Speculation was brisk. Everybody had picked his winner. Questioning glances were exchanged, veils floated in the sudden breeze, which fanned the people pleasantly and caused a ripple of welcome after the sultry, showery day. Then the breeze swiftly assumed the proportions of a wind, which made the crowd fearful that a storm was brewing. All eyes were lifted from the gate,

where they had been riveted till Nellie appeared, to the mountains, where they expected to see a dark cloud. Instead, a magnificent rainbow shone brilliant upon the sky, extended vividly down the dark ridges, and ended distinctly upon the light green hillside, which it touched with fantastic glints, suggesting the bag of gold of childish lore as it frisked and danced, faded and glistened.

"See," cried Nellie with delight, "a rainbow of promise! Bob says I may have that big silver cup if Birdcatcher wins it." She was talking to good-natured Henry Harvey, who had ridden up to shake hands with her.

"You've got Mr. Burton to beat, you must remember," he teased. Nellie looked at Barry as if sizing him up. Then she said:

"Pooh, that's easy! The horse is pretty fair—too much white in his eyes—but a loose seat and bad hands." This last was in a low tone of confidence. She had watched Barry mount and ride off from the stable.

There was a flutter of expectation on all sides—anticipation and excitement were atmospheric; pent-up life and energy waited to greet the result.

Barry felt indignant, and his hunter was conscious of a sudden weakness in the touch upon his reins. He had a feeling that putting that light weight of a monkey on Birdcatcher was a low sort of trick. He felt it would make him seem ridiculous in Betty's eyes if he allowed such a queer

little creature to beat him; but, nevertheless, Nellie's impudent pug nose and wide-open pale blue eyes were a plain proposition—plain in both senses of the word, though her face had a kindly look in it that made one forget its ugliness.

Betty was the only person not amazed to see her ride in; she knew Nellie had been looking forward to riding at the show, and that she and Bob had been busy for a long time schooling their horses for it. She had wondered at not seeing her sooner, till Bob had whispered to her that she was saving herself for the last grand event. Nellie had been tearing around the Cherry Hill neighborhood ever since she was large enough to walk, riding bare-back, breaking colts, riding races on the road with the schoolboys from Hickory Hill, and following the hounds through the undergrowth of the Flatwoods or across the rugged mountain stretches. A rough country of post-and-rail fences, plowed fields, mountain streams and ragged ditches had been her training-ground. At the fox-hunts she kept up with Bob, no matter what happened. His "Come on, Nellie!" was a well-known cry in the Cherry Hill hunting circle, and Nellie would always come on, even if she had to come in at the finish with her riding-clothes torn in tatters by the thickets through which she had passed. She was as tough as a lightwood knot and not afraid of anybody or anything.

Her get-up was comical, but Barry, looking at

his own bare arms, remembered that appointments didn't count in that class. She wore a strange little white hat, turned up in front to match her nose, and her tow-colored hair was done in a tight little knot at the nape of her neck. In front it was slicked back tight, accentuating the homeliness of her plucky little face. Her figure was long-waisted and slim, and she wore a white shirt waist and a linen-colored riding-skirt. But Nellie's seat was perfect, and she handled the double reins of her bridle with the adroit skill of a practiced horse-woman.

Birdcatcher stood quiet, as if posing as a conscious model of horseflesh. He was a lengthy, well-balanced, bright, dappled bay with a little white above the off hind hoof and a narrow streak of it down the middle of his intelligent face. He was so wonderfully symmetrical and well proportioned that he seemed smaller than his actual size, standing as he did something over sixteen hands "in his stocking-feet," Nellie said—meaning without his shoes. His ears, rather long and not too wide apart—those certain indicators of a horse's nature and intentions—stood erect, as if he were alive with thoughts and plans which he had the force and power to carry out.

His head was clean and blood-like, perfectly straight from foretop to muzzle, and his rather dark eyes were full, clear, and round, with a good space between them. His lips were thin and firmly

set against his teeth, suggesting strength of purpose and character; his nostrils were large, breathing in full, deep breaths of air. His well-shaped neck was of moderate length and not too thick at the crest. His long, sloping shoulders were well covered with muscle without any signs of beefiness; and his well-rounded chest, extending deep down between the elbows, gave him lung power, and consequently vigor.

His loins were arched and muscular, with immense length from point of hip to the quarters, which made him cover in a natural position more ground than one would have supposed from looking at his short, strong back. His front legs were long and muscular from elbows to knees, with short, flat cannon bones, clean-cut, prominent tendons, pasterns not too straight, and good round hoofs of medium size. His hind legs were straight, with plenty of length and muscle from stifle to hocks, which were broad and free from grossness—in short, he was “of full size, yet not leggy—strong, yet not clumsy—high-couraged, yet not intemperate.”

Henry Harvey made the first trial at the jump and knocked off the top bar. Then the “Don Quixote” stranger tried in a way suggesting an attack on a windmill, Betty said,—and certainly with no better luck. Bob’s turn came next, and his big colt came pretty near making it, but distinctly touched the top bar, to Nellie’s great re-

lief; she considered Bob a formidable rival and that colt gave great promise of eclipsing Bird-catcher. Then Barry went at it, and Nellie caught her breath—he and his flighty chestnut made a dashing appearance, and barely tipped the top bar. It was so slight that it was almost doubtful—and Nellie *did* want that cup. To get it, her own performance would have to be neat and clean.

Then her turn came, and with it a hush on the grand stand, a thrill of wonder at her daring. The excitement was tense, but the girl and the horse were oblivious of everything except the jump; there was no tremor or nervousness, no quiver, no suggestion of agitation. They were evidently possessed of the intrepidity that the conviction of mastery brings. They seemed to understand each other as if they thought with one thought. She leaned over, patted him on the neck, and said distinctly, so that the grand stand heard, "Make up your mind to do it, old boy."

A gleam of sunshine peeped out from between the clouds as she rode up to the hurdle. Bird-catcher touched the top bar with his nose, as if measuring what he had to do. Then they went back and he came at it in a hand-gallop, with a steady stride, his hind legs well under him. As he rose and sprang she leaned forward and released his head; in a flash, as he descended, she balanced herself well back, steadied him, and they

galloped off, having leaped the timber in magnificent style.

The grand stand went wild with delight, then there was a lull, as if every one had been overcome.

The blue ribbon was fastened on Nellie's bridle, and her face beamed till it was downright attractive when she was presented with the cup. She grasped its shank firmly with her right hand, Bird-catcher responded to the touch of her left, and, cantering up to the hurdle, they cleared it again and galloped out of the ring.

The cheering was deafening till she was out of sight; it was the grand finale of a brilliant show. Then the crowd began to make the move to go.

The wind was rising and there was every indication of a fierce storm when Henry Harvey cracked his whip and his coach rolled out of the gate. Betty's trap followed, and Barry was with her. Bird was right up against the bit as they hurried on toward the town.

Meanwhile, Bob Lewis was hurrying to get his things together, and to start home with Nellie, who insisted on taking her cup in the buggy with her. Major Terrell was tired and decided to spend the night at the hotel. The others were ahead of Bob. He feared a tremendous storm was coming—he wondered if Betty would think of the creek.

He went through the muddy streets of the town at a brisk trot, and by the time they had crossed

the long bridge at the foot of the mountain he saw they would be caught in the storm. Night closed in upon them swiftly. The rain began to come down in torrents, and when they reached the winding part of the ascent, the lightning showed him the coach rumbling along ahead.

"Where's Miss Betty?" he called. She was nowhere in sight.

"She passed us!" Henry shouted back; "that fool mare of hers was pulling like the dickens."

The thought of the creek and a sickening fear took possession of him. Fully aroused, he dashed past the coach to the top of the mountain. Bird-catcher carried him and Nellie wildly down the rough road, over rocks and ditches, up and down hills, across long stretches, past the Devil's Featherbed, while the storm raged madly and the lightning lit up the mountains and valleys. The rain, coming down in sheets, flooded the road, the shrieking wind tore off limbs and blew down trees; his buggy whirled along first in utter darkness and then in blinding light, and the thunder rolled and pealed and crashed.

Bob knew he was approaching the creek. He knew, too, the fearful force of those mountain streams; he knew how quickly they could change from their usual gliding, gurgling peacefulness into a hurrying, heaving strife as they plunged along, bursting from their banks and despoiling all in their way. He had barely escaped being

drowned in that very creek once, and the horrors of his own experience crowded upon his memory painfully. Faster and faster he urged Birdcatcher on. Then from the roadside an old negro called, loudly:

"Stop, marster, stop! De creek's done riz an' swep' evvything befo' it!"

Bob shivered with the horror of anticipation. "Are you frightened, Nellie?" he asked, longing for sympathy, for the sound of a human voice.

"No, I like it," she answered, coolly; "Betty's not in that creek. She's not that rampant a fool."

He was half indignant with her, half encouraged by what she said. He turned a sudden curve in the road. By the vivid lightning flashes he tried hard to see what was ahead; he was sickened at the thought of what he might see. The rain beat fiercely against his face, but he raised his arm and tried to look out from underneath its shelter. The roar of the creek was now distinct; they were evidently very near it.

"Thank God!" he at last exclaimed. The lightning showed him Betty on the other side of the stream struggling to keep Bird quiet. The figure standing near the creek was no doubt Barry.

"Hello-o-o!" he called, and his voice swelled tremendously.

"Don't try to cross!" Barry shouted. "It has been rising ever since we came, and we've been

waiting to keep the rest of you from getting into it."

Separated by the roaring stream, they kept the vigil a little longer in the downpour of rain; then it abated, the moon came out and cast a soft light over the stormswept country, and by the time the coach came up, moving slowly through the deep mud, the stream had gone down so that they could proceed.

When they reached The Oaks at eleven o'clock, all soaking wet, Aunt Lucy and Gilbert came out with lanterns to help them.

"I've got a hot supper waitin' fer yo' all," she said, encouragingly. "Come right in. Miss Sophie say spen' de night. We kin fine dry clo's enough fer evvybody."

It was a queerly dressed crowd that later gathered around the table in the big dining-room where an open fire burned brightly to add to their cheer. Mrs. Pembroke looked after the comfort of her guests; Mr. Pembroke was as usual in his element, and spared no pains to make himself agreeable to the older Harveys and Mrs. Stephenson, whose elegant lilac outfit lay in a wet, huddled lump on the oilcloth around her washstand in the bedroom which had been assigned to her upstairs.

Aunt Lucy tried herself; she knew they must be nearly starved after such a trip, and after having gone all day with only a cold luncheon of sandwiches, fried chicken, beaten biscuit, cake, etc.

She and Gilbert brought in broiled chicken and hot coffee, waffles, turned to a nicety, hot rolls, batter-bread, fresh butter, the first tomatoes of the season, and wound up with frozen custard and raspberries and cake.

It was the first time in a long while that all the bedrooms at The Oaks had been occupied. Barry had the north guest chamber, and the rooms above the large square hall were given to the other guests. Little Nellie stuck her pug nose into her pillow, gave one delighted thought to the cup she had won and another to Bob's folly in thinking so much of Betty, and then fell into a profound, peaceful slumber.

Betty was too tired to sleep that night, and as she turned her pillow first on one side and then on the other, a variety of thoughts whirled through her mind. She regretted Alice's duplicity to Henry—he was too frank, cordial and whole-souled to be so deceived, she thought. Then there was Barry; she made up her mind that there was something sinister about him—something she could never like. She was still guarding her secret about Ralph Redwood. She thought of him constantly, and spoke of him—never. At last she fell asleep and dreamed she was trying to make Bird take the hurdle in front of the grand stand, when she became frightened, jumped the enclosure, and was going right up into the stand when Ralph put out his hand and stopped her.

CHAPTER XIV

THE next morning Barry was roused by the overseer's bell (that was unnecessarily persistent, he thought), and then the roosters in the hen-house in the southeast corner of the yard kept up an everlasting crowing for day. After a little while Gilbert came in, fumbled around fixing his bath, and finally opened the shutters so that the light streamed in on the colonial mahogany bureau, lighting up its brilliantly polished brass scones on either side. The birds twittered about in the oaks and an English sparrow or two flew into his window. It wasn't long before the hens commenced a cackling that it would have taken a million eggs to justify, and then the ducks and guineas commenced.

"*Damn!*" he muttered, too sleepy to shape a sentence, but with a vague notion that the reputed restfulness of the country was a delusion and a snare. The "quack, quack" of the ducks kept up, and the guineas kept squalling, "go-back, go-back, go-back"—they seemed to be making excursions by his window.

"It's no use, with all this infernal noise," he concluded, and then he got up.

From his window he could see old Anderson

busy in the garden beyond the whitewashed picket fence, and before breakfast he went out to wander up and down the grass walks between the grapevines, to look at the enormous box-bushes and the mycophylla roses on either side of the gate, and to wonder at the gorgeous display of flowers while the old man worked.

"All dat over dyah is Babe's truck," Anderson informed him, after they had exchanged morning greetings. The garden was laid off in large squares, and he indicated the southern corner, where Betty's flower garden flourished.

"She was'es a heap o' my time tendin' ter dat foolishness," he continued. "She's got suppen of evvything dat ain' no 'count over dyah. When I oughter be fixin' up my sparrowgrass beds or lookin' arfter de cabbidge plants, an' 'matuses, an' lettices in de hot-bed yander, she's got ter mek me stop wuck an' go ter fiddlin' wid dat stuff." The hot-beds were at the eastern end of the walk from the gate and they were Anderson's pride.

"How soon do you commence gardening down here?" Barry asked, getting interested.

"Soon's ever de wile geeses passes over quonkin' to'ards de norf, den I teks out my hoe an' starts; an' when dey quonks to'ards de souf I knows 'tis time ter git my ax an' go ter choppin' wood fer winter."

"How old are you?" Barry asked when he uncovered his head and showed his woolly gray hair.

"Mos' a hunnerd, I 'spec's," he answered, opening the top button of his clean unbleached cotton shirt to cool off. "Mis' Sophie know—'tis sot down in de Bible. Marster allays kep' a Bible fer his servants' ages."

Anderson wore a quaint old linen coat and a pair of light gray trousers much the worse for wear, though clean and neatly patched. He stood bow-legged as he conversed with Barry.

"Ef yer wants ter live long and 'joy good health, yer has got ter go ter bed at dark and git up at light. Dat's de way de Ole Marster 'ten' fer us ter do, and when we don', we's layin' out we own road ter de Bad Man. Dat's right, sho. De mos' o' de drinkin' an' cyard-playin' an de carousin' is done when dat light up yander," pointing to the sun, "is out, an' dey think de Ole Marster cyarn' see; but he kin dough, an' he sets down evvybody's deeds on his account—fer or agin him."

Barry didn't care to moralize. "What's over in the flower garden?" he asked.

"I'll show you. Dyar's roses widout end, but I don' know dyar names 'cep' de Maiden's Blush—dyar's a bed of dem over dyah. Ole miss—dat's Ole Miss Terrell, Mis' Sophie' mother—sot out dem roses. Dat sweetbriar bed Babe brung over in a barsket one day f'om Mis' Alice's, an' nothin' mus' do but I mus' stop den an' dyah an' fix 'em—little ole nothin's! Den all dem big

bushes you'll have ter ax Babe 'bout—dey's got cuyous, new-fangled names. Dat one is name Paul suppen—I believe 'tis Paul Knee-Run—but I dunno, 'tain' while ter say. Babe made me dig up de tuberoses over dyah—said dey were like some folks, sickenin' sweet. Over dyah is de sweet-williams, den dyah is vi'lets an' lilies, an' yander is whar de chrysanthems will be—Miss Stephen-son say 'tis de mos' malicious mariety o' chrysanthems she ever see. Dat dyah citronalys is Babe's pet—she likes ter smell it—den dyah is verbenys an' petunys, an' geranymums, an' helytrokes, an' hollyhawks, merrygolds an' mornin'-glories, fer-git-me-nots an' five-o'clocks. Dem's bleedin'-hearts in dat edge o' de walk, I kin allays 'member dem. But er, shuh! what's de use o' talkin' 'bout dis truck? Ef yer wan' see suppen sure 'nough, I'll show you de currant-bushes, de gooseberries, de strawberries, de rozberries, an' de vegetables."

After he had talked "gyardenin'" to his heart's content, he pointed over to the northeast. "Over dyah is de orchid," he said; "dyah's whar we has apples, pyars, peaches, cherries—evvything. You jes' oughter see hit in de spring when hit's all in bloom." Then, as if suddenly struck by a thought, he said, "Air you one of Babe's beaux?" He always said "air" when he was talking to "quality," and he noted that Barry had come from prosperous people, to say the least.

The simplicity of the question quite surprised

Barry, but he quickly answered: "I should like to be."

"Well," the old man continued, confidentially, "I'm 'feerd she's wastin' her golding moments. I'm 'feerd she's gwine pick an' pick tell she picks up er crooked stick."

Altogether, Barry had not felt quite certain of the success of his suit since his arrival at The Oaks. In the first place, there was nothing dilapidated about the establishment, as he had been led to believe was the case with all of the old Southern homes under the new régime. The broad acres of land, it is true, were not well cultivated—but the house, the lawn, the garden and the stables showed the good management of a practical mistress; they had not "gone down" since the olden days when servants and money were plentiful. Barry was amazed at the air of prosperity surrounding the handsome place. Instead of taking Betty from privations, as he had imagined, he saw he could scarcely offer her a home as attractive as her own. And, then, the provincial lovers were different from what he had expected. Bob Lewis was genial and handsome, and a young West Pointer at home on a furlough, who dropped in to call, was certainly an Apollo; Barry wondered what significance there was in old Anderson's philosophic remark.

After breakfast, Betty and Barry sat out in the rustic seat under the lilacs, and his manner was


somewhat constrained; evidently something out of the ordinary was weighing on his mind.

"Ever since I met you that first evening in New York, Miss Pembroke, I have realized that I care more for you than I have ever cared for any one else. I have grown very anxious to know my fate," he said suddenly, surprised to find himself so embarrassed. He wondered why he was so ill at ease, so little of an expert at real love-making.

"I am sorry that things have taken this turn, Mr. Burton," she answered, with provoking evenness. "We make excellent friends, but I think we differ too decidedly in our views of life to think of being more to each other than we now are."

"How do you mean? Explain yourself, I beg of you, and let me understand exactly. In what way are our views so different?" he insisted, knowing all the while that the address on "influence" at Cherry Hill had summed up his case precisely.

"In the first place," Betty answered, composedly, "reverence is a very important word in my vocabulary—it was left out in yours. You think church-going and all that sort of thing a perfect bore; I could never be contented with living a life that was only a restless pursuit of my own pleasure—I should feel like Tantalus the whole while." After a moment's silence she added: "I have an active disposition and I get pleasure out of many things that would seem dull



to you." She realized that her remarks were not exactly connected, but while she wanted to be frank she also wanted to be polite.

"For instance?" Barry interposed.

"Well, I love flowers, I like to read, to sew, to sit and think, to potter around the yard and garden; and, while I am of a fairly sociable disposition, I often like to be left alone and to busy myself with the small affairs of life. The woman you marry should love society above all things—to dress well, to entertain, to spend her time in a round of gayety, to live in excitement—but it would bore me to death."

"And yet you seemed to like it," he said, rather bitterly.

"For a time, yes—but not for a lifelong occupation. I could never belong to that throng who do not hesitate to rouge, to touch up the hair, to pencil the brows—it is not my style and I couldn't do it."

"You do not need to do it."

"But when the time would come when you would think I should need to do it, I still couldn't. It is against my bringing up; and the many things I couldn't and wouldn't do would bore you to death, because your environment has been so different. A husband and wife should think with the same thought—what seems wrong to one should seem wrong to the other."

Barry thought of his mother, of her artificial

appearance, of her worldly views about people and things, of how she would disapprove of his wanting to marry a woman like Betty, of her cold manners and her calculating heart—of everything about her that suggested that she did not “ring true.” For the first time in his life he realized that he wished it were all different: for, though still far off and by no means thoroughly awakened, he was conscious that there was something better in life than anything he had ever known. He nevertheless replied, with a touch of sarcasm:

“Then you think you are better than the rest of the world?”

“Not at all,” Betty answered. “But for my mother’s bringing up, there is no telling what I might have been. My close companionship with her is the most precious possession I have on earth; and when I willingly give it up it must be for something in many ways similar to it—for something that will help me on upward to what I should like to be.”

She spoke with great feeling. Barry wished he could be in full sympathy, but he couldn’t. And she knew better than he wherein lay the great gulf between them.

“I partially grasp your meaning, and yet I do not see why any of the things you have mentioned need come between us,” he persisted.

“There is a still greater difference,” she said slowly, touching upon something that she would

have preferred to leave undiscussed, "and that is the question of divorce. To me marriage is something sacred—to be entered into carefully and prayerfully—to be lived up to faithfully. To you it is a mere contract, to be broken at pleasure. I should be bound—you would be free."

"I do not see that we need consider this at all," he remonstrated, resenting what she implied. "Divorce is for people who live together unhappily."

"When people hold divorce lightly, it is more than probable that they marry figuring on it as a possible escape if they make a mistake. I do not believe in this state of affairs at all, and when I was with Aunt Margaret she often spoke of how much of it there was among your particular set. If unhappiness forces people to separate, then let them separate, but do not let them make other vows to be as easily broken. A man's word should be his bond—and a woman's should be hers. If a tie so sacred has to be broken, then let them live out their lives singly and bravely. I am weary of hearing about people who are too weak to do what is right. But don't let us argue—you have your views—I have mine. I like you very much, but in all seriousness I am not in love with you; and even if I were, in time my rigid views would become tiresome to you," and then she laughingly tried to change the subject.

"I have always succeeded in getting what I

want," he continued, with stubborn persistence, "and I am not going to give up."

"I am modest enough to think I am nothing very wonderful to strive for, but the house of Terrell is answerable for a dauntless race, and through my mother I am one of them," was her decisive reply.

The frequency of divorce among Barry's friends had struck Betty forcibly, and she wondered sadly about her mother's fate. Had her mother secured a divorce and gone on living her life out without its burden, she would still have loved and respected her—but if she had formed other ties? Betty would not allow herself to think how she would have felt, for in her mother was summed up all that was good and strong.

It may have occurred to Barry when he left The Oaks that afternoon with his "walkin'-papers," as Aunt Lucy had predicted from the first, that there was something prophetic in old Anderson's remark about the crooked stick, and in the guinea's "go-back!"

CHAPTER XV

SIX weeks later Betty went over to Sweetbriar to spend a few days with Alice, who had just returned from Atlantic City with her mother.

Sweetbriar was a fascinating place, with its large circular yard and its trees of every variety. The house was a long two-story cottage with two porches in front, giving the idea of two small houses built together, and in the yard was a quaint little square building with one large room, which was fitted up for a library. The cottage and library were both painted white and the shutters were all green, making the place particularly cool and attractive for the summer.

The yard was hemmed in with cedars, and the front gate, its posts ornamented on either side by fancy urns, opened upon the main road. Within were evergreens of many kinds—pines, Norway spruces, cedars, hemlocks, and all the family of fir trees. Here and there a maple, an elm, a beech, a locust, a chestnut, an oak, proudest tree of them all, mingled fraternally and showed that once upon a time somebody had lived at Sweetbriar who loved every growing thing.

South of the yard, on the side of a hill protected from the north by evergreens of tremendous size,

was the garden, where the two girls loved to walk and talk, exchanging their girlish confidences. It was almost a reproduction of the garden at The Oaks, only the Sweetbriar people claimed that they always had vegetables a few days ahead of the rest of the neighborhood, and certainly nobody else could claim the honor of raising English walnuts, which flourished there among the cedars that bordered the garden. The fragrant smell of sweetbriar, which was indigenous, scattered itself all over the place and welcomed one from the very moment the gate was entered.

A porch ran all around the library, and crimson ramblers were trained up its pillars and around its top, at the foot of the white balustrade. Wide windows with French blinds opened to the floor, and the handsome paintings brought from Brookwood hung on the cool white walls within. Mahogany book-cases and writing-desks, an old-fashioned secretary with many queer little drawers, comfortable leather chairs, and a large center-table with brass claw feet, where the latest magazines were kept, made this an inviting spot; and in the summer time evergreens were kept banked in the large fireplace, making an attractive background for the bright brasses. They were never packed away, for one never knew when a cool, damp day might make a wood fire desirable. It was here that the two girls sat in the mornings with their embroidery and talked over their affairs.

"I have a surprising secret to tell you," Alice announced, as soon as they were comfortably settled the first day of Betty's arrival. Her sewing lay idly on her lap—she was too wrought up even to make a pretense of working.

"Is it another string to your bow? another engagement?" Betty asked, knowing pretty well by this time what manner of person she had to deal with.

"Yes. Guess who it is this time." Alice looked at her searchingly. She wondered what effect her information would have on Betty.

"I haven't the slightest idea," she answered, running over in her mind everybody who was eligible.

"Barry Burton." Alice spoke slowly and deliberately.

Betty laid down her work, but never winced. "You don't mean it," she said, showing surprise and curiosity, nothing more, to Alice's relief. "How did that come about?" She was thinking that they had had few opportunities to have progressed so far.

"I made up my mind the day of the horse show that you were not in love with him," Alice continued coolly. "Honestly, if I had thought you were I should never have wanted to interfere, nor do I flatter myself that I could. But I saw that you were amused at Henry's little jokes, that bore me, and I also saw that you were intensely bored

by Barry's lover-like attentions, that would have pleased me to death. I made up my mind then that everything was starting out with the wrong foot foremost and should be set right. When you went off to ride in the Hunt Team Class and Henry was looking after some of his horses, Barry and I got up quite a mild little flirtation—you see, that sort of thing came natural to us both. It had started slightly at The Oaks the day before." Alice had a quick, bright way of talking, showing that she thought rapidly, but not deeply.

Betty listened attentively, utterly amazed that such duplicity had been going on under her very eyes. Then Alice suddenly changed her tone and asked, eagerly: "Frankly, Betty, did he propose to you that day before he left The Oaks?"

"Why don't you ask him that question?" Betty answered, by way of evasion. She saw that she would have to do some fencing.

"I am not quite sure that he told me the truth. I hoped you would." She was decidedly serious, and she spoke slowly, giving weight to every word.

"There seems to be a lot of double dealing all around. Did you tell him that you are already engaged to two other men?"

"No, that isn't any of his business," Alice answered, with decision.

"Then it isn't any of yours whether he ever offered himself to anybody else or not," Betty

laughed. No one could help being amused at Alice's audacity.

"I am awfully in earnest now, Betty. I honestly intend to marry Barry. My wedding day is set." Her manner was excited.

"You haven't explained to me yet how the affair has gotten to this point without my knowing something about it." Betty became more and more astonished as she thought over it.

"When I was sure there was nothing doing between you and him I set out coolly and deliberately to catch him. He is too good a chance to throw away. When he left The Oaks in June and went North he sent me a bunch of stunning American Beauties, and wrote that one of the regrets of his trip to Virginia was that he had been able to see so little of me."

Betty looked at her, and with difficulty refrained from bursting out laughing. Truly, Barry was an adept at lying.

"When I wrote to thank him," Alice continued, evenly, "I told him that mother and I were just leaving for Atlantic City, where the doctors had advised her to go. He met us there, was with us constantly, proposed, and we are going to be married quietly here in August. Barry wants a big wedding, but I don't. It's too much bother." Then she continued, with more energy: "I am awfully tired of a hum-drum life. Mother is good, in a way, but very tiresome to me. I do so long

for the busy whirl and a lot of excitement. My capacity for enjoying life is *so* great and my opportunities have been *so* limited."

This was true—nobody had a sweeter nature than Alice's, even if her standard of rectitude was not of the highest. Betty wished something more dependable than Barry was to be her fate. She had distrusted him before—now she was convinced.

Alice was irritated by her silence. "Barry has promised me everything," she went on, as if contending that she was doing something wonderful for herself. "I believe he really adores me."

What could Betty say under such circumstances? She was puzzled. She then decided it would be best to offer no suggestions.

"What about Henry and Adolphe de Brune?" she asked. "Have you told them?"

"Not yet. Adolphe writes he is coming to Virginia the very day I'm to be married. That will be very romantic, won't it?"

Betty had no comment to make. Alice seemed satisfied that it was all right, and there was no use to argue about principle with a person who claimed none.

"What a creature of impulse you are, Alice," she said, looking at her earnestly. "I don't see how you could make up your mind so quickly."

"There is so much mystery connected with myself and the house at Brookwood that I long to

get away from here—away from everything associated with the community but you, and you can come to me. I believe that Mrs. Stephenson never tried to find out about my people; I believe she was actuated by selfish motives, and sometimes I hate her for it and long to get away from her. I've never had anybody of my very own to love. That's the reason my love is such a light thing—as light as a feather that settles for a moment and is then carried on to the next object by the first passing breath of air. Don't think that Henry or Adolphe will be grieved at losing me. In a month's time they'll have forgotten me entirely. That's the way of the world." She spoke bitterly.

"Henry will care, I know," Betty insisted.

"He hasn't as light a nature as you think."

"Barry simply has more to offer than anybody else can give me—not more money than Henry has, perhaps, but 't isn't money that I want—I've never needed that. I couldn't go back to Brookwood—it would kill me." She spoke with more force than the occasion seemed to demand.

"Why?"

"There are too many awful associations there. I am going to tell you all about it, and when I'm gone I want you to promise to tell Henry. He ought to have been told before he bought the place, and since they have moved in I've never had the nerve to tell him—it looks as though we did

not do the square thing, and I'd hate to be considered tricky in money matters. That is a mysterious old house, and I'm afraid of it. During the war old Mrs. Stephenson, the old English lady, hid away all sorts of valuables in the queer recesses of the house, and some have whispered that a lot of money may be hidden there." Alice's voice was taking on that same tone that Aunt Lucy's had the day she confided Peachy's diagnosis of the case.

"The fact that money is hidden there ought not to be any drawback to the place in the eyes of its present owners," Betty suggested, looking at the portrait of the old English lady that hung over Alice's head. It was a fine old face with a merry look in the blue eyes, as though she were amused at the mysteries her memory awakened.

"But that isn't all," Alice continued. "I was always hearing curious noises—mother said it was the rats, and old Peachy declared 'twas the old English lady's ghost walking around."

"She doesn't look formidable," Betty laughed, looking again at the merry, ruddy face.

"Anyway, it's creepy, and that old attic room always kept me uneasy. I believe whole families of tramps might have been born, lived and died there without being caught. Didn't you ever hear the story of that room?"

"Never."

"One night during the war the old English lady

was entertaining a party of Southern officers at dinner, when a servant whispered to her that the yard was full of Yankee soldiers. 'Put out the lights,' she whispered. In a moment the Yankees came into the room, and when they could find a light, there wasn't a Southern soldier anywhere to be seen. The house had been surrounded so that there was no possible way of escape. 'I command you, madam, to give up those soldiers!' the Yankee major said to her, in a loud voice. 'You forget, sir,' she answered, 'that you are speaking to one of her Majesty's subjects. The English flag floats over this house, as you would have seen had you come in the daytime like gentlemen. If you can find a soldier on my premises, you are welcome to do so.' They looked everywhere—every nook and corner of the house was searched. The disappearance of the soldiers was as complete as it was mysterious."

"What had she done with them?" Betty asked, excited over the story.

"Do you remember the wainscoting in that old dining-room—the wainscoting I told you to notice the day we spent with Mrs. Harvey?" Alice asked.

"Yes."

"There is a sliding-door in it, made so cleverly that nobody could ever detect it. This door opens on a narrow staircase that leads to a room in the attic, where the soldiers were concealed. They say

the old lady got the idea from some old castle in England."

"I believe I've read of such a place in one of Scott's novels," Betty remarked reminiscently.

"When we used to go away Peachy always declared that lights would be seen in the house at night, going from room to room, but I never believed it till I had an awful experience there that I can never forget." Alice's face paled at the thought, and her whole manner was that of one really terrified.

"Do go on," Betty urged, breathless with expectation.

"Mother and I came home unexpectedly from the Springs one night—we had been away some time and had not intended returning quite so early—and some time after supper she asked me to go to the dining-room and bring her a glass of water. I distinctly heard footsteps in the dining-room as I approached, and fully expected to find Peachy there. I opened the door, and as I looked in a light shone from behind the place where I knew the sliding door was. It was not quite closed, and I saw a big white hand draw it together. I screamed with terror, and when they came to me I had fallen in a dead faint."

"How awful!" was all Betty could say. The whole thing was so realistic—she almost imagined she could see the hand.

"Mother said it was imagination. Old Peachy

declared it was the old English lady, but I knew it was neither. That night we sent for the overseer to sleep in the house, and the next day we decided to sell the place and move to Sweetbriar. Now, you know why I have hated to tell Henry. Will you promise to tell him when I'm gone?"

"Provided you will promise to write to Adolphe and save him the pain of being the rejected lover at your wedding," Betty said, none too anxious for the delicate task.

"I'll do that," Alice agreed. "Writing to a man that you can't keep your promise to marry him is easier than telling him so."

The day before Alice's wedding Henry Harvey went to The Oaks, in answer to a note from Betty asking him to do so.

"She has acted to me most outrageously," he said, as soon as she broached the subject of Alice. They were sitting among the lilac bushes where, scarcely two months before Betty had explained to Barry very conclusively that she and he could never be happy together. Henry, though hurt, was dignified. Betty told him all the story about Brookwood just as Alice had told it to her.

"I could have taken her somewhere else to live," he said. "Poor little girl!" he continued. "She little knows what she is doing. I suppose a prouder man than I am would scorn to think of a woman who had acted to him so treacherously."

"Don't use such a hard word," Betty pleaded; "I can't bear to blame her."

"I don't mean to speak of her harshly," he continued, "for, God knows, I think she deserves my pity, though she has done me the greatest injustice a woman can do the man that loves her. I did love her devotedly, and I am truthful enough to say I shall love her always—with the love one would give a child that would hurt itself without knowing it. The time will come, I'm afraid, when she will be sadly in need of both your love and mine. Burton's hard, selfish nature shows in his handsome, dark face. I am not so sure but that revenge is the noblest motive that prompts him to marry the woman who lightly throws away my deepest devotion."

Betty looked at him with surprise—did he know that Barry had proposed to her?

Suddenly turning to her, he took her hand, and, in a voice quivering with emotion, continued: "Will you promise me solemnly that, no matter what happens, no matter what she does, when the time comes that she will need us, you will help me do for her what only you and I can do?" His words sounded like a prophecy.

"I promise solemnly," she answered with agitation.

The next day Alice was married to Barry in the library at Sweetbriar. Betty was the maid of honor, and the only people that came down with

the groom were his mother, the best man, and the clergyman. The only other people there were Mr. and Mrs. Pembroke, the Lewises, Mrs. Stephenson, of course, and Major Archie Terrell, who gave the bride away. Alice had ridden over on Ben Bolt to ask him to act in that capacity for her.

"You know I don't belong to anybody," she had argued. "I'm as much yours as anybody's else, and if I ever amount to a row of pins it will be because the things you have said to me have taken root in my heart. But I'm not going to promise to be good; something always happens when I do."

And so Alice, for the time, passed out of the life of the Cherry Hill neighborhood.

CHAPTER XVI

THERE was one change that the neighborhood made every fall—in September the brick school-house on Hickory Hill reopened, and generally a new tutor came to take charge of the boisterous crop of boys that came from the adjoining farms to be cooped up six hours daily, laboring over the *Pons Asinorum*, learning the clever reply that *Ariovistus* sent to *Cæsar*, or following *Xenophon* on his famous marches, when their vigorous young minds were full of hunting, riding, shooting, and fishing. Nellie Lewis was the only girl who attended the school.

This tutor's advent was naturally watched with interest, not only by the boys, who were anxious to know whether he would be "easy" or not, but by the country beaux, whose ranks he would join, and by Betty herself, if the truth must be told, and also by the "Widder Barnes," at whose house he was to board.

When Mr. Rochambeau Rose arrived in the town with his trunk and his box of books, he was so keenly watched by a negro boy, driving a spring wagon with a pair of speckled gray horses hitched to it, that he thought it worth while to ask whose team it was.

"Mister Widder Barnes's, suh, an' she sont me over here fer Mister Ro—somethin'—'rother Rosebush, de new schoolteacher," was the cheerful answer, and the boy helped Rochambeau in with his baggage.

Every young person in the neighborhood was out horseback riding that afternoon on the road leading from town to the Widder Barnes', ostensibly for pleasure, but in reality to get a glimpse of the newcomer.

He was well dressed, Betty observed; broad-shouldered, the schoolboys noted; and too handsome to be a desirable acquisition, Bob Lewis thought.

"He doesn't look a bit like a Frenchman," Betty said to Bob, after they had ridden out of hearing of the speckled team. "I expected to see a little dark man, smoking a cigarette—didn't you?"

"He has name enough to be anything," was the only comment Bob had to make.

Rochambeau's fine gray eyes twinkled when he saw how earnestly the boys watched him when he passed, although the determined set of his mouth and chin made one say to the others:

"That man ain't goin' take a bit o' foolishness, an' we can jes' look out for trouble if we go to playing pranks. It's all rot anyhow, shutting us boys up to cram our skulls 'bout Thermopylæ, and Marathon, and all those chaps that were busy

then, when we've got so much to do outdoors that's some sense in doing."

These were Jack's sentiments. Jack Lewis, Nellie's youngest brother, was an expert at all outdoor accomplishments, but he had always been "sour" on the school question, and was always the ringleader when it came to mischief. The following Monday, when the time for recess was over, and he didn't see the formidable school-master quietly reading in one corner of the school-room behind a desk, he said impatiently:

"I can't see why that great lazy devil don't come on, and be here in time to 'tend to his business."

"Keep on, Jack, don't mind me," was the composed reply which came from the unsuspected corner, and which had more effect in keeping Jack straight the rest of the year than many a sound whipping at the hands of a less quiet man would have had.

The Widder Barnes was greatly pleased with her new boarder, and sang his praises at home and abroad—he never gave a bit of trouble, was a perfect gentleman, and always had the best of manners.

It was not long before he was a visitor at The Oaks on Sunday afternoons; then he began to stay to tea; later, as soon as school was out Friday evenings he would be off, and sometimes the Widder Barnes would not see him again till

Monday morning. He had at last found his Easter girl.

Bob, now very much "out of it," to use his own expression, determined to overcome his restlessness by breaking his two new bay colts.

"That makes a fellow forget all his troubles," he said to himself, "and, if I don't feel all right by the time I get through, I'll buy a couple more to break."

When March came that year, bringing the first glad note from the redbird, and the noise of thousands of French frogs announced the birth of spring, even before the dull gray of winter had been touched by the rich green of the more welcome season, it was noticed that Betty had become quite a pedestrian, and that she and Rochambeau spent the hours between the close of school and twilight in wandering over the fields and on the mountainside where the little brooks began, springing out from beds of moss and banks of ferns.

Rochambeau now wore the little golden harp, Betty's music medal, hanging from his watchchain, a large picture of her in her military riding-habit looked smilingly from his mantel, and the Widder Barnes noticed that a mouchoir-case, daintily embroidered in pink wild roses, reposed in the top drawer of his bureau.

Bird was having quite a rest now, but she would have to make up for it when Rochambeau went away for his vacation.

As the warm weather came on, Betty took to wearing the most fascinating little sunbonnets; half the time she dangled them by the strings instead of carefully protecting her complexion—with her it was a toy, a plaything, not a beautifier.

Rochambeau admired her bonnets extravagantly. One day, as they sat under the trees at The Oaks reading "David Copperfield," he picked up the dainty muslin headgear, and, noticing the tiny red print, said:

"Why, Betsy, it's a key—your bonnet is covered with little red keys."

"How stupid to make all keys and no locks," she answered, examining closely the numerous collection.

"The locks are underneath, my lady," he said, placing it on her head and smiling with pleasure at the pretty picture she made.

He then went on reading about Miss Betsy Trotwood, whom he admired so much that afterward his terms of endearment for Betty were "Miss Betsy" or "Betsy" or "Trot" or "Trotwood." Ah, those glad days when gentle words and tender looks made their lives sweet! They were in the first fulfillment of their dream of happiness. No quarrel, no jealousy had yet come to cause a ripple in that uncertain sea on which they had just set sail.

Rochambeau was a man of limited means, but

unbounded ambition, and in him Betty hoped she had found her ideal—but had she? His manly strength and beauty had appealed to her at first, and then his character and noble conception of the meaning of life had aroused her admiration, and awakened her love. Could she form an idea in those brief months of the durability of that love and of the steadfastness of purpose in those dreams of the future that Rochambeau constantly laid before her? Their engagement would necessarily be a long one, but they consoled themselves with saying that a love which could not stand such a test was not worth having.

It has been said that the man whom a woman truly loves is the one with whose faults she can most patiently bear. Betty did not allow herself to think that Rochambeau had any faults. She was too young to realize the frailty of all things human, or to foresee that if she built too largely upon his perfection it was a foregone conclusion that she would have a disappointment.

When the school closed in June they parted, each thinking the other endowed with every possible good quality, as well as with extraordinary personal charms. Rochambeau stopped in town on his way home, and selected at the book store a copy of "Poe's Tales," as Nellie Lewis' prize in scholarship. To Betty he sent a beautiful copy of "Marse Chan."

All went well till it reached Rochambeau's ears

(such important news always travels swiftly) that Betty frequently spent her afternoons riding horse-back with Bob. No one told him that she rode to the post-office eager for his letters, and that poor Bob's soul was tormented by the many evidences of her devotion to her absent lover. Bob was the one who needed sympathy; yet Rochambeau began to get into gloomy moods, his letters to Betty became more and more irregular, then rather cool, then decidedly cold, and hers to him stopped altogether. He finally began to realize that the fault was probably his, and, hungry for some word of love and encouragement, he suddenly appeared at The Oaks before breakfast one morning, glum and haggard, all because of his own unfortunate, suspicious, jealous nature.

"I didn't think you capable of such distrust, Rochambeau," Betty said, showing in her pale face that she also had suffered. "Bob does join me often when I am riding in the afternoons, but you know perfectly well that I have not the slightest sentimental feeling for him, and you certainly would not want me to be rude and disagreeable to a friend who has grown up with me from childhood. Besides, my letters proved that my feeling toward you was just the same as when we parted, and you surely didn't think I was deceiving you, Rochambeau, did you?"

There was a touch of scorn in her voice—the smallness of it all wearied her.

"Betsy, I am ashamed of myself," he answered, "thoroughly ashamed—I seem to have such an unfortunate disposition, sometimes I can't understand myself."

This time, however, their differences were adjusted; but Betty had learned that Rochambeau did not have the big, generous, confiding disposition she had attributed to him, and Rochambeau was afraid that Betty loved admiration so much that she could not be contented without it—their first discovery that they each had faults; and, despite the saying that distance lends enchantment, when they were separated they seemed to magnify and brood over each other's imperfections and inconstancy till the pain they gave themselves was almost unendurable.

Sometimes mystery seems to haunt the human heart. Although Betty tried hard to understand herself, there was one incident which she was forced to admit had made a strange impression upon her—her brief meeting with Ralph Redwood asserted itself in her memory at all kinds of odd moments when she thought she was thinking about something else—and she tried hard to forget—to forget.

"If she was really in love with Rochambeau, why did the other image pursue her so persistently?" She asked herself this question again and again, and struggled against a steadfast element in her character that seemed to be only a folly.

CHAPTER XVII

THE next winter was a quiet one for Betty. Rochambeau had returned to college to complete his education; consequently there was nothing much for her to do except to read the books he sent her constantly, to do some hard riding, and to work over her Sunday-school class at the Cherry Hill church, where she still played the organ every Sunday, while Bob sat and watched her every movement. Her mother, dissatisfied with the narrow life she was leading, had planned for her a summer at the White Sulphur Springs—something that she considered essential to the successful girlhood of every Virginia belle.

Betty, however, had other things in view which were more to her taste than spending the warm summer months in dressing for entertainments and in making herself generally agreeable to a lot of strange people. She set out with some friends from the neighborhood to ride horseback to a quiet boarding-house buried in the depths of the backwoods, forty miles from the railroad, and five miles from Rochambeau's home. At this rendezvous for elderly widows and maiden ladies her friends left her in the care of a cousin of her mother's, while they proceeded on their way to another resort. When the party rode up to the

Little White Cottage—a long, low, white building with green blinds that were pointed at the top in a quaint fashion, and dormer windows that peeped out from the roof—a number of the old ladies were sitting on the wide porch. They were busy with occupations peculiar to their age and condition—such as knitting shawls, crocheting sacks, putting together crazy quilts, and doing the queerest kind of embroidery in hideous shades of worsted.

When Betty, somewhat tired and dusty from her long journey, dismounted, and asked for Cousin Edmonia Wingfield, a pleasant old lady with white curls, partly covered by an immaculate cap, came forward, and kissed her affectionately, protesting that she was delighted to see Sophie Pembroke's daughter. An old-fashioned negro woman with a bandanna tied around her head, reminding Betty somewhat of Aunt Lucy, took the baggage from the wagonette. When Cousin Edmonia had taken Betty to her room, the old ladies began:

"Did you ever see such a bold piece!" exclaimed Miss Patsy Riley, one of the most vinegar of the lot. "The *idea* of a *lady* jumping down off her horse without help! And she actually had on boots—tan boots at that—and hardly any skirt at all! Such mannishness in my time wouldn't have been countenanced. Why, we used to wear modest, full riding-skirts, and

black velvet caps with long white plumes in them. Here this girl comes dressed exactly like she was too poor to buy goods enough to make a decent skirt. I don't know what the world is coming to!"

Miss Patsy's seventy years of fault-finding had left no trace of softness on her withered, yellow face; there was nothing about her that suggested that she could speak sweetly, even to a little child. She was about to resume her criticism of Betty when Miss Angelina Trigg, the old lady with dark hair and complexion that was still pink, whispered:

"Hu-u-u-sh-sh! I have always heard that the Pembrokes were elegant people, and the child has a sweet, pretty face, and lovely manners. Let me see! The Pembrokes were descended from one of the first settlers, I think. I know some of them are D. A. R.'s."

"Fiddlesticks!" retorted Miss Patsy, drawing down the corners of her discontented mouth, when Mrs. Brownley (a weak-minded, simpering widow, who had been a strawberry blonde in her time, and who had of late years lived only for the purpose of seconding Miss Patsy's views, no matter what turn they took) leaned over toward the other ladies and said, in a low, drawling voice, that just bordered on a lisp:

"Did you notice that curious stick she rode with instead of the neat ivory-handled whips we used to have? Dear me! poor Edmonia is going to

have a time looking after that girl! I heard her say she had some fishing poles—a regular tomboy come to keep us all in a state of flurry, instead of bringing her drawing, or something else that would be ladylike.”

While all this was being said Bird stood tied to a branch of a tree in front of the porch, and occasionally sniffed as if turning up her nose at such old-fashioned notions.

“Look at that bridle and saddle!” said Miss Patsy, picking up the thread of the conversation. “The girl must be crazy—she’s got the pommel that we used to hang bundles on taken off entirely; and what in the name o’ common sense is the good in that other pommel, all bunched up on the side of the saddle? The idea of her riding with two bridles like she was a circus woman!” and Miss Patsy took herself off to her room, next to Betty’s, to see if she couldn’t overhear what was being said to Miss Edmonia, while Bird coughed so contemptuously that she fairly snorted, and the rest of the ladies, looking around anxiously, withdrew closer to the house.

“I rather like the child’s riding things,” said Miss Angelina, after Miss Patsy had gone. “They were quite the style when I was down in Richmond last winter. You know Miss Patsy couldn’t join the D. A. R.’s,” she continued, lowering her voice, “and I fancy her people were not very aristocratic anyway—she thinks unless things are

just like they were when she was at the Springs twenty years ago they are not just right. I declare, some people stay at home so close that I don't believe they know the war is over."

The tea-bell rang, and they all gathered in the big dining-room. Betty's seat was between Cousin Edmonia and Miss Angelina.

"Won't you have some butter, dear?" said the latter, helping her, and beginning at once to cultivate her acquaintance. "You know I almost feel as if I had known you before—when I went down to Richmond to look up my family tree, I saw so much about the Pembrokes—such lovely people—and so well connected! You know I can trace my line very far back—to the time of the Conqueror. I am descended from Trictus Tregg and Sir Roger de Mendenthall. Our old castle is still in England—Dillum Castle—and the family names are all on the tombstones there—so my nephew, Doctor Triggs, who has traveled, told me. All the people here are not so well connected as you and I, dear," she said, lowering her voice to a scarcely audible whisper; "indeed, some of them are quite common—they are not ladies at all."

Betty could not help smiling at the thought that the terms "common" and "lady" should receive such abuse in this remote spot, just as they had when she had been bored by them in the great city of New York.

On the porch, after supper, Miss Angelina

pulled up her chair near Miss Edmonia and Betty and resumed the conversation:

"I am sorry, dear, there are no beaux here in the house—am afraid 'twill be stupid for a pretty young girl like you. I always had so many beaux when I was young—and I liked it, too—but I never married because all of my lovers were too fond of drink. Sometimes I think maybe I ought to have married some one of them. Judge Samuel was an old beau of mine, courted me time and again. Judge Samuel drank hard then, but he turned out right well after all.

"Last winter when I was down in Richmond I had quite an experience," she continued, simplifying. "I met such an elegant-looking gentleman there—he had iron-gray hair, and was very distinguished. He was—um—quite attentive to me," lifting her eyebrows nervously, and speaking as shyly as a young girl with her first lover, "and do you know, dear, he—he—he—courted me; but I found out——"

Miss Edmonia, who had gone to the farther end of the porch before this part of the conversation, now rejoined them, and her presence checked Miss Angelina.

Miss Edmonia took Betty to her room early and left her, saying: "You have made an impression, so prepare yourself for Trictus Tregg, Sir Roger de Mendenthall, Dillum Castle, and 'my nephew, Doctor Trigg,' for breakfast, dinner, and supper—but I will protect you all I can."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE next morning Rochambeau appeared bright and early, and from that time on the old ladies spent their time discussing the lovers, who walked, fished, rode, read, and talked to their hearts' content.

"He is taking his ducks to a very poor market," Miss Patsy sharply remarked one day, as the two young people sauntered off with the great brindled Dan close at their heels. "He'd a great sight better be finding some nice domestic girl that will make him a good wife, instead of that independent piece, that never sews a stitch, and would be perfectly helpless if the cook left."

"Miss Patsy makes such inelegant speeches," said Miss Angelina, in a low tone, to another lady at the other end of the porch. "I am sure the child mended her skirt very nicely where she tore it getting over the fence going to the post-office. That reminds me that I've forgotten to ask them to mail my letter," and she hurried down the little narrow road to call them back.

"I am sorry to annoy you," she apologized, "but this is a very important letter to my nephew, Robert Trigg, and his wife. Robert's very hen-pecked, you know, and that is the reason I ad-

dressed the letter like that," she said, handing Betty the little envelope bearing the superscription :

" The Messrs. Trigg (Robert and Lucy),
" Middle Oak,
" Virginia."

Rochambeau pocketed the letter, and he and Betty went on their way, laughing over the queer turns that human nature sometimes takes.

Betty was so absorbed in her own affairs that she did not realize how much talk she had caused at the usually quiet place. She was making a study of Rochambeau, though he was not aware of it. The winter he had taught in her neighborhood she had only seen what was attractive in him, but it had gradually dawned upon her that he had some marked peculiarities. She found that he was given to "moods," that there were days when he was frank and charming, and then that there were other times when he withdrew behind an impregnable reserve.

He had not learned to live earnestly and simply, although his strongest point, in Betty's mind, was that he was quaint and old-fashioned in his ideas. In reality he was full of a false ambition that one would never have suspected—an ambition to break through the narrow confines of an obscure existence that the lack of means forced upon him, to shine in the world, to keep up an extensive

establishment, to drive a swell turn-out, to be quite a "somebody."

"Betsy," he said one day, "you are different from the rest of the world. Now, I frankly admit that at first I was drawn to you because you were pretty, because everybody else admired you, and because I knew you had had innumerable proposals of marriage from very desirable men. In other words, men measure a woman's worth largely by the way others think of her—they want to marry women that they will be proud to be seen with; but I know that you have had suitors that amount to a great deal more in the world than I do."

There was a peculiarly cold, calculating undertone in what he said—pitifully ignoble, hopelessly disheartening to one of her refined and sensitive temperament. He did not understand what a blow it was to her. To admit that he did not have sense enough to know what he himself liked—to admit that he had followed in the footsteps of others, like one of so many sheep! The pettiness of it made her soul sick.

"I am sorry, Rochambeau," she answered, in a broken, pained way, "that you wouldn't have cared just as much for me if you had met me here in the mountains for the first time; I am sorry that my individuality hasn't the strength to impress itself upon the heart and mind of the man to whom I have engaged myself. If God had not

intended us to use our hearts and minds, I think he would not have given them to us."

Rochambeau tried to undo what he had said by declaring that she was all the world to him, but an unfortunate impression, once made, is hard to shake off.

Betty's stay at the Little White Cottage passed quickly. The night before she was to return home Rochambeau lingered, and even Miss Edmonia wearied a little of the book she was reading in the parlor, while he and Betty sat on the porch talking quietly, the moonlight shining on their young faces.

"It is hard to think that you must go to-morrow, Betsy," he said, "and I am already bitter over having to spend next winter so far from you; but I must work, and this position in the West offers the best opening for the present." He was in a good mood, and he spoke gently.

"It will leave me very, very lonely, Rochambeau," she answered softly, "but I suppose we must wait for that better time that is coming."

"I am weary of these long waitings," he continued sadly, "and I am growing rebellious against the fate that makes my lot that of a poor man. If I could only afford to take care of you as I should like, I could be happy."

He always dwelt on his poverty; it had seemed to Betty more than once that his great ambition might yet be the stumbling-block in the way of

happiness. Lately a thought had been growing upon her that the perfect congeniality did not exist between her and Rochambeau that should exist between people who expected to spend their lives together "for better, for worse." She sat and watched him that night as he strode away in the moonlight, and her heart was full of sad and strange misgivings. With his exaggerated notions about what a man should be able to give his wife before he had any right to marry, it would be a long time that she would lead the lonely life his jealous nature demanded of her. Fortunes were not to be made in a day, and she knew it. The glitter and show of all worldly things meant very little to her. From the void in her mother's life she had learned that it was love, gentleness, helpfulness, and an abiding faith in God that made life sweet—she knew, too, that no amount of money could supply these things.

A bitter fact had been revealed to her this past month. Rochambeau, brought up by quiet, secluded people in a country atmosphere, was as much at sea about religious matters as was Barry Burton, whose whole existence had been spent among artificial, frivolous surroundings. She thought over it seriously; her faith possessed her, though she could not explain it—just as she breathed and lived, though she could not tell how it was done. What could this lack of faith mean? What could be causing young Americans, growing

up in a country of religious freedom, to wander so far from the Truth? Could it be that tobacco and whisky were dwarfing their manhood, obliterating their noblest impulses, as had been the case with her poor father? Rochambeau, however, had neither of those vices; he had intimated that the study of moral philosophy had put him to thinking, and that what he could not understand he could not believe. Did he, a mere atom, expect God to reveal to him all the mysteries of his universe when he was not yet faithful to the small trust that had been bestowed upon him? If he had deplored the fact that he could not believe, he would have won her sympathy, but that he could speak lightly and arrogantly of such things aroused her disgust. Truly, all humanity was a complex problem, but the inconsistencies in Rochambeau's make-up were the most perplexing that she had ever had to solve.

Betty had never aspired to realms of what is called advanced thought. She knew instinctively that the true life is led close to Nature—in mingling with one's fellow-creatures; in trying to help them when they go wrong; in feeling that to condemn is as easy as it is ignoble; in enjoying the simple pleasures of life instead of striving after those which are impossible; in sympathizing with those who are in trouble; in encouraging the downhearted; and, withal, in never losing that nearness to God which she herself felt as she galloped along

the roadside as well as when she knelt in prayer. This was all as natural to her as flying is to a bird. Consequently, she felt that a man without religion was like a house without a foundation; no matter how strongly built it might seem to be, it was liable to fall at any moment. She could not put her trust in such a man. She wanted to be able to lean on her husband, if she ever had one, not to have to act as a prop for him.

Her soul was tormented by contending emotions when her Cousin Edmonia bade her go to bed, and, fortunately, after the day in the open air, nothing could keep her awake long. Dan dragged his chain uneasily the full length of the porch several times, then flounced himself down heavily under her window, and for a while all was quiet.

CHAPTER XIX

SHE could not tell how long she had been asleep when she was aroused by curious noises in the hall. When she looked out to see what was the matter, she saw nearly all of the elderly ladies running about aimlessly with candles in their hands.

"Poor thing! Poor dear!" Miss Angelina was moaning, "she's dying—dying—and there's no one to help her—no, not even a man to send for the doctor."

"Who's sick? Where's Cousin Edmonia?" Betty asked hurriedly.

"Miss Patsy is dying with some kind of curious fits. Miss Edmonia's in her room trying to help her, and there's no one to go for the doctor—no one to go for the doctor," Miss Angelina repeated hysterically. "All the darkies have gone to the rally—even old Larkin—and there's nobody but old Cynthia on the whole place."

In a few minutes Betty had on a white shirt-waist, a white riding-skirt, and the much-abused tan boots. Her heavy plait was hanging down her back. She hurried out to the stable, and old Cynthia held the lantern while she put the bridle and saddle on Bird. The old cook's hand trembled.

Bird pricked up her ears nervously, and Dan moved about uneasily at these strange proceedings.

"Now, hold my foot in your hand, Aunt Cynthia, and when I count one, two, three, give me a shove," said Betty.

In another instant she was in the saddle. She gave a low whistle for Dan to follow, and they dashed down the road before Aunt Cynthia realized all that had happened.

"Gawd bless dat chile!" she said. "Ef it hadn' a-been fer her, Miss Angeliny never would a-rested tell she'd a-got ole Cynthia started off down dat road on foot arfter de doctor, an' he libs mighty nigh seben miles fum hyah. Nights like dis sperits sho does wander 'bout, an' I been hanted lately by curisome feelings ennyhow. I gwine in de kitchen an' smoke my pipe in peace, an' thank Gawd fer d'liv'ring me dis night fum prowlin' 'bout whar de owls does hoot an' de ve'y shadders move."

While the old woman soliloquized, Betty rode on—on—down the mountainous road, speaking every few minutes to Bird and Dan, whose companionship meant everything to her in the dark, lonely woods. The moon stole out fitfully from under the clouds, and the katydids talked incessantly—all else was as still as death. A heavy mist hung over the mountains and hid the valley below.

After they had traveled several miles, Dan be-

gan a low, uneasy growl; his nose supplied the place of eyes. Betty's nerves were wrought up to the highest pitch. Presently she galloped past a crowd of colored folk—men and women, boys and girls—who, terrified, took to the edge of the woods, while Bird swerved as far to the other side of the road as possible. The party was coming home from the "rally."

"We is sholy done seed a live hant in de flesh an' blood dis night, Bre'r Larkin, an' it ought fer ter be a lesson to we all ter keep in de straight an' narrer path," said Bre'r Abraham, who, as the most religious of the party, was the first to break the silence.

"Ef we had a-kep in it, we'd a-been runned over sho," answered old Larkin, Cynthy's husband. "I wus skeered sech as I ain' never been skeered befo' in dis life, but I is sut'n'y thankful I wus one o' de chosen ones ter see dis sight. I gwine tell Cynthy dat signs is wuss dan de long-tailed comet she talk so much erbout when lady hants does rise up outer dee graves, an' ride, all robed in white, wid der hyah flowin' down der backs, summonsin' de sinners in dis worl' ter mend der ways. Bre'r Abram, I so skeered I got ter set down an' res' 'fo' I kin go anudder step."

The younger members of the party looked to Bre'r Abraham and Bre'r Larkin for moral support after their trying experience with things supernatural, and, when the old men admitted how

"skeered" they were, it threw the others into even greater consternation.

Betty reached the doctor's, and he was on his way to the Little White Cottage, saddlebags and all, in an incredibly short time, while she, together with Bird and Dan, gladly accepted the hospitality offered by his good wife.

The next day, when she returned to the Little White Cottage, she found Miss Patsy quite herself again, and surrounded by all the good ladies of the house. When Betty rode up, jumped down, and ran up on the porch to join them, she was received with overwhelming praise.

Miss Patsy was quite embarrassed. She was no hypocrite along with her other unpleasant qualities, and as she had been hitherto outspoken against Betty she was now equally warm in her commendation. One little spark of genuine goodness had laid hidden in her heart all these years under the rubbish and refuse of envy and hate, to be fanned into flame at last by one act of unselfish kindness.

When Betty went to her room she found Cynthia sitting in a low rocking-chair by the window, one elbow on her knee, her head resting on her hand, and her black face wearing an expression of profound thought.

"What are you doing, Aunt Cynthia?" Betty asked, surprised at the melancholy attitude the old woman had assumed.

"I'se jes' settin' hyah, honey, studyin'," she answered solemnly.

"What are you studying about?"

"I'se jes' studyin' 'bout gittin' a di-vorce."

"A divorce, Aunt Cynthy! What do you know about divorces? Who told you about divorces?"

"I heerd Miss Angeliny say dat de peoples all ober de country gits di-vorces dese days whenever things don' go ter suit 'em. Honey, I'se so out-done wid Larkin I cyarn' nebber hab no mo' patience wid him—an' he a partik'lar member, too, an' been a leader in pra'r all dese years! Now he done gone an' made a fool of hisse'f, an' nobody ain' nebber gwine pay no mo' 'tention ter nothin' he say; I cyarn' stan' bein' tied ter one o' dese small pertaters dat has ter set back in chu'ch an' listen whilst de sensibler folks talk," and the old woman's face took on every expression of disgust and contempt.

"What has Larkin done, Aunt Cynthy, to make him take such a fall from grace?" Betty asked.

"Done, honey? Why, he come in dis mornin' 'bout daybreak, whilst I was settin' by de kitchen stove smokin' tell 'twus time ter git breakfus', an' de ole man wus mos' half crazy. He commence a great tale 'bout what he see las' night; 'bout a lady hant all beautifuller dan a angel, ridin' on a great white horse dat wus rarin' an' snortin' an' tarin' de yearth as he come 'long, an' de hant wus exhortin' an' exhortin'. I let him go on wid his

tale, jes' ter see what he *wus* gwine say, an' den I riz up an' tole him, I says: 'Larkin, you'se a lyin' ole black fool—dat what you is! Dat wus Miss Betty ridin' dat sorrel mare Bird arfter de doctor fer Miss Patsy.' I spoke so solemn an' scornful dat he went out o' de kitchen, an' he look back real pitiful when he say: 'Cynthy, I'se ruined fer life. I'se done been an' tole dat tale at evvy cabin 'twix' hyah an' Wake Forest.' Den de ole man sneaked off like a sheep-killin' dog an' hide hisse'f. Now, Miss Betty, does yer blame me fer studyin' 'bout a di-vorce?"

"You ought not to divorce him for that, Aunt Cynthy, because it was a natural mistake," Betty said, by way of conciliation, and trying to hide her amusement.

"Yassum, so it wus; but you know dat tale 'bout de white horse wus a lie—a big black lie—an' he even tried ter fool ole Cynthy wid it, when I'd stood by an' seed you put de bridle an' saddle on dat little sorrel mare o' yourn," and then Aunt Cynthy took herself off to the kitchen, completely "outdone" by the tremendousness of Larkin's deception.

Later on Rochambeau came over for his farewell visit. When Miss Angelina gave him an excited account of what Betty had done, she was surprised to see him draw himself up perceptibly and look anything but pleased.

When Betty joined him in the parlor, he said

very coldly: "What in the world did you mean last night by taking that long ride alone, when you promised me never to ride by yourself any more?"

"I meant that I was scared nearly to death to do it, in one way," she answered, in a strange tone that brought him to his senses, "but I couldn't let the old lady die for the want of attention. I am tired and worn out from the nervous excitement of it all, and I am in no humor to have my conduct discussed by you, or anybody else. I do what I think is right, without fear of anybody or anything."

Her heightened color and flaming eyes were in strange contrast with her composed manner and her quiet, controlled voice. Rochambeau wished from the bottom of his heart that he had not been so presumptuous.

"Take your ring," she continued, slipping it off her finger, "and, in giving it back, remember I break every promise I ever made you."

She had said and done all of this before Rochambeau took in the situation. She left him standing in an attitude of dumfounded surprise, his hand on the table where his ring lay, a mute proof of the seriousness of the occasion. She was gone. There was nothing for him to do but pick up the ring, take it home, and hope for an opportunity to plead with her to forgive his wretched unreasonableness, his unpardonable lack of courtesy. It began to dawn upon him that he was

falling far short of Betty's standard of gentle breeding.

She left the Little White Cottage with her friends that afternoon, showered with loving speeches and endearing epithets from the old-fashioned ladies who had received her so critically a month before.

Too tired to ride horseback, she climbed into the back of the wagonette, and they started off, with Bird tied to the seat, and Dan trotting along behind.

They jogged along till they reached The Oaks about twelve o'clock that night, to be welcomed by her mother and Aunt Lucy, who had been counting the days since her departure. The experiences of the past twenty-four hours had left her worn out, body and soul, and the peace and restfulness of home had never seemed so sweet before.

That night she had a vivid dream—she was out in a violent storm, troubles of every kind beset her on all sides, and, when the terror of it all reached its climax, she was suddenly conscious that Ralph Redwood was beside her, and his look and his voice reassured her.

"Only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a silence."

CHAPTER XX

THE first thing after breakfast the next morning Betty rode over to Uncle Archie's. She found him out in the field looking at his corn crop. When she told him she wanted to have an interview with him, they sat on the fence in the shade, leaving Bird to graze quietly as they talked.

"Uncle Archie," she said, "things have come to the point where I must pour out my heart to somebody, and you know you are always my mentor when I am in trouble."

"What's the matter now, little girl?" he asked with the kindly sympathy that she had been sure of ever since she could remember, and that was to her always a priceless treasure.

"It's about Rochambeau," she said; and then she told all that had happened the day before.

"I have been afraid that you have been making a mistake," Uncle Archie said thoughtfully. "But meddling with love affairs is a serious business."

He was silent a moment, as if collecting his thoughts, and then he went on:

"I am going to tell you, Betty, plainly and frankly what I think about Rochambeau, since you have mentioned the subject to me. I have been sorry to see things going as they have been

between you, for I do not believe he ever could make you happy. He has attractions and good qualities—he is sober, upright, and a gentleman—but it takes even more than this to make a person lovable.

“You ought to marry a reasonable man, above all things, one who would respect your views and be open to conviction, for you have too much sense ever to be molded according to another’s fancy. If you marry at all, by all means be sure you have chosen a truly congenial person, for therein your happiness will lie. Rochambeau’s attitude toward mankind in general is cold and hard and unforgiving and uncharitable, while you are all sympathy and helpfulness. Years of suffering might change him, my darling child, but I doubt it—life is full of disappointments, and they would only make him bitter, while you have already had your share of sorrows to soften and sweeten your character.”

As a child Betty had never thought much about her father’s worthlessness from a business standpoint, nor had his dissipation ever bothered her personally, but of late years the enormity of the burden borne by her mother had dawned upon her and saddened her. Uncle Archie had always avoided referring to this subject, and, noticing that she winced at his last remark, he went on hurriedly with what he had to say.

“Rochambeau has neither seen nor appreciated the best that is in you,” he continued, “and the

cheery disposition that appeals to him so strongly now will become less and less cheery under the withering atmosphere of his somber views. I have already seen how his 'moods' affect you; the strength of your convictions might in time be worn out, and you would be left a shattered wreck of your lovely self.

"Betty, drinking is not the only thing in this world that brings unhappiness. There are people whose depressing influence makes the stoutest heart sink, whose constant discouragement takes the zest out of the most hopeful undertaking, whose bitterness reaches out from themselves and sharpens the dispositions of all around them, whose lack of tact and consideration wears away the greatest love and patience, and whose general morbidness overwhelms their little world with gloom—and yet they may not know the taste of any strong drink.

"Now, I have told you what I think, but you will have to solve this problem for yourself—no one can solve it for you; and, yet, I feel it is working out right. Every heart knows its own secret feelings, and no one else can understand perfectly its longings and its loneliness. I think when the person comes along who can share all your happiness in full measure and help you over all the hard places of your life, you will know—something will tell you, and there will be no

doubts. That you will do your part well I have no fear."

Betty thought of her dream the night before, and a strange feeling rushed upon her—had Uncle Archie some peculiar intuition to have guessed so closely?—no, how could he, when he never had heard of Ralph Redwood?

As she rode home she struggled against that look and that voice, which were so unceasingly realistic, as she would have struggled against any vague, unseen, uncertain power which fascinated while it might be deluding her.

When she reached The Oaks, Rochambeau, tall, handsome, penitent, came out to help her off her horse. He had been watching for her ever since he had arrived an hour before. It seemed to him like ages since he had seen her.

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN Rochambeau left to fill his engagement in the West, Betty again wore his ring. She read a great deal that fall, and her daily ride on Bird helped to divert her, for she was now more lonely than ever. She rarely saw Bob these days, and the society of the neighborhood was not thrilling. Uncle Archie was the only companionable person within many miles of The Oaks. She had outgrown her surroundings; even the new people who had come to the community had ceased to be interesting to her, for her heart was sad and her mind was tired. She was distinctly unhappy and discouraged.

"Uncle Archie, I wonder sometimes if I am very different from other people," she said to him one bleak winter day, as they sat by the blazing fire in the library at her home. "A sense of loneliness that annoys me is creeping into my life."

A blinding snow was falling in big flakes outside; the great bare oaks lifted themselves fearlessly against the howling winds, and the gray mountains to the north and west were fast being clothed in garments of white. On the center-table was a silver waiter full of Albemarle pippins, such as Mr. Stevenson had presented to Queen Victoria

when he was Minister to England, reminding one that in the old days—the days of Jefferson and Monroe, of William Wirt and Andrew Stevenson, of W. C. Rives and Thomas Walker Gilmer—the section had been in touch, indeed, with the world: now it seemed apart from all life and action, remote and cut off. It did seem hard to Uncle Archie that a girl like Betty should have to spend so much of her young life shut in from the world, but the keynote of his whole life had been—"encouragement."

"Don't bother," he said cheerfully, seeing that Betty's face wore an expression of great sadness. "Things will right themselves in the course of time. Don't let yourself get into the habit of looking on the dark side, for this old world invariably throws back at us the reflection of what we give out to her."

It was another heart-to-heart talk with Uncle Archie, and Betty felt that it was good to be able to tell him exactly how she felt about things, so she went on with the unburdening of her soul:

"I know all that, Uncle Archie, but sometimes I am sad and lonely, and, though I struggle against it, I have the feeling here of a caged bird—the feeling that I would give the whole world to be able to fly away, for a while at least, and see new people and new things. My busy nature demands action, and my mind needs food for thought, and change of diet. I love these red hills, these mag-

nificent mountains that give us so much variety—and I love the work at the little church, indeed I do, Uncle Archie. But I am tired of it all, and my soul is hungry—hungry to hear the great singers, to see some of the doings of a large city, to go to the theater, to get myself out of my old ruts, to have something new to think about. I want to go—go—go—then I would be content to come back and stay a long while quietly here. I think at times I am just a little heartsick.”

“Betty, the trouble is you are worrying about something. I wish your Aunt Margaret would take you to New York again. You need a change.”

“I *am* worrying about something,” she said sadly. “Perhaps it would be an easy matter for most people to settle, but for me it is very hard—harder than any one can ever know. In my heart of hearts I am not satisfied with my engagement to Rochambeau; yet I feel I am not loyal to him in hinting at such a thing, even to you. I want to act in perfect good faith, yet I hate—I do hate so much—to shatter one of my dearest ideals. All my life I have hoped that the man who is to be my fate would be the only one I had ever loved, and that I should be the only woman he had ever loved. God only knows what this ideal means to me, and I shudder when I feel myself on the brink of its destruction.” From her drawn face and the troubled tone of her voice Uncle Archie

knew that it was no sudden, gloomy fancy that had been brought about by the bleakness of the day.

"Betty," he answered earnestly, "everybody in this life makes mistakes. Don't let an ideal, no matter how beautiful it may be, stand between you and what you know is right. If in your heart you are doubtful about being happy with Rochambeau, break your engagement—break it now, positively and forever, regardless of everything. Where there are doubts you cannot give your best love, and you owe it to yourself and to him not to make a farce of your lives. Face the right with determination, and you need have no fear for the future; but yield weakly to a fancy now, and the trouble you will bring upon yourself will be immeasurable."

Mr. and Mrs. Pembroke now entered the room, and the conversation drifted to other subjects. Lately a change had come over Mr. Pembroke. He stayed at home all the time, and seemed to be shaking off the folly, which had wrecked the best part of his life, with a determination that surprised all who knew him. At last the prayer which had been on Mrs. Pembroke's lips ever since the trouble came was answered; at last, after clinging to him through long, weary years, the burden of her life was lifted.

CHAPTER XXII

MAJOR TERRELL's life was a full one. The poor and the troubled all turned to him for help and guidance.

One day, when it was nearly Christmas time, Betty rode over to see him, as she often did, and was told that old Ailsie Eddis had sent for him in great haste. She was about to die, and in her terror she thought of him as the one likely to give her some consolation.

Old Ailsie had been notorious all her life as a scoffer at religion. She was looked upon as a wretched, miserable mischief-maker, and her presence in the community, ever since the day she had come from no one knew where, had been deplored by all who had the good of the neighborhood at heart. Now she had received her last summons.

Betty hurried to the poor little shabby hovel where the old sinner had managed, by hook or crook, to eke out a miserable existence, and where many a basket had been left by Aunt Lucy—for in the goodness of her heart Mrs. Pembroke had been one of the few who saw no charity in letting the wicked suffer.

When Betty reached the doorway, she paused and listened.

"Major Terrell, I have led a wicked, sinful life," the old woman was saying, in a pitiful way, "and I know it's too late now to repent; but pray for me—please pray for me. Can't you do something for me? I am a lone, wretched ole creetur—all o' my ways has been ways o' darkness, but maybe if you'd pray God to help me it might not be too late yet. Ain't thar somewhar in the Bible 'bout a thief on a cross bein' saved?"

Betty could not see into the room from where she stood, and she forbore to enter, but she heard Major Terrell say, in a positive, reassuring way:

"It is never too late to repent, Ailsie. When a heart is sad and tired and worn out with sin and wickedness, God is ever ready to forgive, if we ask for forgiveness. Don't look backward—look forward, and put your trust in Him who can help you. Pray for your sins to be forgiven—then forget them, no matter how black they were, and look to the brighter life beyond."

"But I am skeered thar ain' no use axin' to be forgiven now, when it is too late fer me to do any good works fer the Master. It seems so miserable and mean and low-down to ax to be forgiven fer a loose life when it's too late fer me to mend my ways, and help others out o' darkness."

"Ailsie, when those whom you have influenced for evil know that at the end you needed the Lord Jesus Christ and called upon His name and asked

to be forgiven, it will not be your fault if it doesn't undo any harm you have done."

"Major Terrell, will you tell it all around everywhar, then," she pleaded, "so that everybody kin know I do repent o' my sins? I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I feel the need of Him 'gins' I've come to die. I want to be saved, and I beg as 'umble as a dog to be fergiven."

"I will tell it publicly at church on Sunday," he answered.

"God bless you," she murmured; "now help me to try to say a pra'r—the time is short. Then I'll try to tell you something 'bout the Metlow murder."

Betty heard a movement as of one getting on his knees, and then her uncle said, "Now, Ailsie, follow me," and the feeble, quivering voice repeated:

"Lord, wilt Thou in mercy have pity on a soul that has been wandering far from Thee. Wilt Thou forgive and blot out the many sins that I have committed against Thee, and wilt Thou give light to one who has long been in darkness. O Lord, it is not justice that I plead for, but mercy. Wilt Thou lift the burden of grief and sorrow that my own wrongdoing has cast upon me. Wilt Thou let me feel that peace that cometh from Thee alone, and wilt Thou receive me into Thy rest forevermore."

Here the faint voice grew weaker; then Betty

heard her Uncle Archie pray alone, fervently and feelingly, his favorite prayer:

“O God, we feel the comfort of Thy presence, though Thou art unseen. Thou hast said: ‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ This blessed promise raises us from the deepest depths of darkest gloom, and gives us the abiding faith that sustains those who put their trust in Thee. O God, do Thou encompass us with Thy love. Let us feel that we are indeed Thy children, and that, though we are prone to wander like lost sheep, Thou wilt always bring us back into the fold of the Good Shepherd. Increase our faith, I beseech Thee, and, as the days go by, let us feel that we are drawing nearer and nearer to that time when we shall dwell with Thee in Thy many mansions. When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, be Thou with us. Let us fear no evil. Let Thy rod and Thy staff comfort us. Teach us how to pray, how to comfort those who realize the frailty of all human things and earnestly desire to seek Thee. Forgive us, O God, when we fail in this, and all we ask is for Christ’s sake. Amen.”

A few minutes later, when Uncle Archie came out to call those who had been watching with the sick woman, and to tell them that all was over, he found Betty waiting outside. As it was not un-

usual for her to want to see him, he paid no particular attention to it, and they rode on together, discussing what had just happened.

"Things like this," he said, "show me how utterly I fail to do my full duty. As we grow old it is the little kindnesses that we have done all the way along the roadside that we love to think about, and that measure the real worth of life. No one of us can bring about a great wholesale reformation, but each of us can certainly try to do the little part assigned him in the great plan of the Creator. Life—life—what a wonderful word! How full of meaning it is, and yet how little we seem to realize its actual significance! When we pass over to the other side, how little it will mean whether we belonged to the class that dressed well, that went in good society, and that held itself up, so to speak; and how much it will mean to have done our best in the uplifting of all around us.

"I find right here in these Flatwoods a great problem—a problem that probably confronts many other sections. These white people have held themselves above anything like household work because the colored people have always done it. The consequence is that the blacks to-day live in greater comfort than the poor whites do, because their women have learned how to keep house; and the poor whites, on account of their isolation from those who are better off than they are, have

gradually but steadily deteriorated. I see but one way for us to reach them now, and that is through the children—through the schools, and through the church work. People who enjoy the comforts of decent living, the refining influence of culture, and the same guidance of the right sort of companionship are too apt to condemn the shortcomings of the ignorant masses, and too little given to trying to help them to better their lives.

“Old Ailsie evidently wanted to say something about the Metlow murder, but she grew suddenly weaker, and her secret has passed away with her. A hovel like that is apt to be the shelter of crime, yet who can tell what brought her down so low?”

Betty had been touched by what she had heard at old Ailsie's, and she sincerely sympathized with her uncle in his wish to be constantly doing something to help the people of the Flatwoods, but she was too disturbed by her own thoughts to be able to lay them aside. She made no reply.

“Uncle Archie,” she said abruptly, after they had gone on for a while in silence, “I had a letter one day last week from Cousin John, urging me to come up to New York for the Christmas holidays. I wrote Rochambeau that I thought I would go, but I have changed my mind.”

Uncle Archie made a mental note that she was still writing to Rochambeau.

“What made you change your mind? I think

it would be the best thing for you to do," he said.

"Uncle Archie, don't you really see any reason why I should stay at home?" she asked, so earnestly that she startled him.

"None at all," he answered, wondering at her troubled manner.

"Haven't you noticed any change at home, Uncle Archie? Haven't you noticed how ill mamma looks? Haven't you thought she has been getting worse ever since she took that cold the first snow we had? Oh, Uncle Archie, it is killing me," and the great tears streamed down her face. She realized that her mother had been on a nervous strain all of her life, and that at last her wonderful constitution had broken down.

"Don't worry so, little girl," he said soothingly; "I don't think you need to be so uneasy. I'll go home with you and we'll see. Maybe your mother needs a trip and a rest."

"If it weren't for you, Uncle Archie, sometimes I think I should die. To be in trouble and not to have anybody to talk to about it is the worst suffering on earth. It seems so hard to be an only child." She felt the need of some one who could sympathize with her anxiety—her desire for a sister was very keen just then, though she had never thought of it before.

"Now, don't worry about that, Betty," said Uncle Archie. "You might be far worse off if

you had a house full of brothers and sisters than you are now. Sometimes the fine natures in large families are dwarfed by the coarser ones, just as the choicest flowers in a garden may be hedged in and blighted by great aggressive weeds that spring up, unless the gardener is careful."

They were now entering the gate of The Oaks. Betty thought of the little white tombstone down in the corner of the garden, where she had often read the inscription:

"Sacred to the memory of
"Sarah Harwood Pembroke.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Surely her Sister Sallie would have been a blessing to her if she had lived. She thought of the many times she had lingered by that little grave, and had wondered about it all—how it was so strange that her tiny, beautiful sister, whom she had never seen, should be lying under the ground there, sleeping in her little coffin, and yet, at the same time, be singing with the angels around the throne of God. Ah, the wonderings of childhood, how they come back to us in after years!

CHAPTER XXIII

CHRISTMAS was a dull time at The Oaks that year. Uncle Archie had taken his sister to Florida as soon as he realized that Betty's apprehensions were not without foundation, and every servant on the place, as well as the poor in the neighborhood, bemoaned the absence of the Christmas cheer that was always expected from the hands of those who were away.

Betty struggled bravely to have the Christmas dinner at the little church go off well, and the spirit of optimism that had always been one of her greatest blessings helped her to see, somewhere behind the dark cloud, a silver lining. She forced back the tears that would spring when the well-meaning, but tactless, poor people made blunt remarks about her mother's delicate appearance when she went away: and the only time a spontaneous smile illumined her face was when one of the older boys in her Sunday-school class awkwardly presented her with a worsted "fascinator," remarking:

"Mis' Betty, you goin' ketch yo' death o' cold, ef you don' stop goin' 'bout bar'-headed, an' I brought this here vaccinator fer old Chris ter hang on the tree fer you."

Rochambeau sent a beautiful etching, represent-

ing a scene on the Isle of Jersey; but no letter, no word of sympathy came—perhaps, indeed, the time had passed when any demonstration of affection from him would have awakened response in her sad heart.

The weather during Christmas and for weeks was execrable—it rained and snowed and sleeted, the roads became almost impassable, and Betty found but little pleasure even in riding the sure-footed Bird.

The bitterness of the new sorrow, the gnawing agony of suspense, the anxiety of watching and waiting for good news were so all-absorbing to her that she could not have told afterward whether the winter had been pleasant or severe, whether the sun had shone bravely or whether the whole world had been enveloped in clouds. Soul sunshine does not depend upon the elements for its radiance, and soul shadow cannot be dispelled, or even mitigated, save by the secret comfort of heart-to-heart communion with God. She prayed constantly and fervently, and she seemed nearer to the Great Unknown than ever before.

The heavy grayness of dull, anxious days seemed interminable to the sufferer; she felt years older when, as the last of February drew near, Uncle Archie wrote that they would be home with the first day of spring.

For her the hand of time was fast approaching the hour of supreme darkness.

CHAPTER XXIV

It was a beautiful day, though it was the middle of March, when they laid Mrs. Pembroke to rest by the side of little Sallie's grave, under the grand old oak in the corner of the garden.

Aunt Margaret and Cousin John reached The Oaks the morning of the funeral. The yard was filled with carriages and vehicles of every description; the neighbors had come to pay this last respect to the one whose gentle life of uncomplaining suffering had quietly passed away. She had been a friend to the rich and to the poor, and all felt that in losing her they had sustained a personal bereavement—that a place had been left vacant which never could be filled.

John Pembroke remembered that long ago he had heard his Aunt Sophie say that she had only one wish to express about her funeral, and that was that the casket might be covered with roses. During her illness he had sent flowers constantly. Now, knowing that it was too early for the Virginia gardens to be in bloom, he saw to it that her coffin was covered with American Beauties, her favorite flower, a fitting tribute to one whose radiant beauty had made her a queen among women, and whose sweet nature had been like fragrance to all around her.

Her husband wept piteously, not only grieved that she should die, but inexpressibly remorseful over the unhappiness he had caused her. Betty bore her sorrow quietly throughout the service, which was held in the large parlor, and when she followed to the grave, where servants, neighbors, family, friends, stood with bowed heads and sorrowing hearts; but when the minister came to "Dust to dust and ashes to ashes," she cried out, "Oh, mamma, mamma!" and her Cousin John led her from the grave, his own heart too full for words.

When all was over, and only the members of the family were left at The Oaks, he pleaded with her to break up her home.

"Betty," he urged, "your life here will be too much for you. Think of the loneliness of this great house, with only you and your father in it. Let him live with Uncle Archie, and you come to us for good."

But she could not make up her mind to leave her father.

Meanwhile, in her Aunt Margaret's room upstairs, Aunt Lucy was pouring out to her some of the history of Mrs. Pembroke's life.

"Miss Marg'ret," she said, "I'se been wid Miss Sophie ever sence dat night when all o' you come to de ole place to de weddin' in ole Marster's an' ole Miss's time. Don' you remember, Miss Marg'ret, what a gran' weddin' it was, an' how

evvybody said Miss Sophie was de pretties' bride dey had ever seed, an' dat Marse Jeems cert'n'y was a han'some, promisin' young man? "

" Yes, Lucy, I remember it all just as if it were yesterday. Dear, dear, how time flies, and how things change! "

" Miss Marg'ret, I reggin dat was de grandes' weddin' dat ever was in de county. Miss an' Marster spyared no pains ter have it all right, an' I remember how fine you all looked in your hoop-skirts, an' silks an' satins an' laces. De ole house, wid de gole mirrors an' brasses an' mehogany, shone dat night, an' us colored folks was proud ter see our work make evvything so spick an' span fer Miss Sophie. I wish evvything in life could a-been spick an' span fer her. I'se been wid her th'ough all her trials an' tribylations, an' no sweeter ner better ner graciouser lady ain' never lived.

" When we firs' begin to know dat Marse Jeems was drinkin', 'twas when little Sallie was a baby; I thought Miss Sophie would a-cried her eyes out. Then when little Sallie died Marse Jeems made all kinds o' promises ter do better, an' fo' mont's after dat Betty was born. I was thankful fer de new baby, 'cause I knowed how Miss Sophie had been grievin' fer Sallie, an' I thought de new one 'ud console her some.

" But Marse Jeems never kep' his promise, an' it seemed dat he got worser an' worser. When he did happen ter be 'bout de house, he never done

nothing but smoke an' read norvels. Miss Sophie had ter look after evvything. Right smart o' de property dat ole marster lef' her had been swep' away by de war, an' fer a while money was so hard ter git dat Miss Sophie taught de free school, tell Marse Archie come back an' put a stop to it. Fer some reason, I fergit now, Marse Archie didn't come back fer right smart while after de surrender.

"Meantimes, Betty was growin' up ter be a pyearter an' pyearter gyirl, an' her ma seem ter take all de intrus in de worl' in her, an' in givin' her edjycation an' all de chances she could; but Marse Jeems ain' never lif' his han' ter help 'bout nothin'.

"Arfter while Miss Sophie got kinder reconcile ter it, an' never seem ter bother much, 'cep' when de winter win's come. She's said ter me many an' many a time, 'Lucy, I can't bear ter sit here an' listen ter de win' moan round de house. It gives me an awful feelin',' an' I useter go in dar sometimes an' set down by de fire in her room an' rub de brasses, jes' ter keep her company.

"An' now de good Lord has done took her out o' dis worl' o' trouble, an' she is at peace an' res' wid Him. Me an' my chile ain' never had no frien' like her, an' po' Miss Betty is lef' a orphan."

The next day Betty and her father were left alone in the great house. She stayed with him faithfully, trying to divert his mind from his sor-

row, but it was a trying, weary task for her. He looked upon himself, as he was, a poor, pitiful, broken man who had been laying up for himself no deeds of kindness with which to fill the still house of memory, and his grief was present and all-absorbing.

When night came on, he went to bed early, hoping to lose himself in sleep.

Betty sat by the window in her room, looking out upon the moonlit country. Moonlight always had had a fascination for her. In the yard the oaks cast long shadows, the whitewashed palings of the garden shone like an army of ghosts, and in the distance the Flatwoods stretched in a long, unbroken line against the horizon.

She thought sadly of the mental, physical, and moral poverty of many of those whose lives lay hidden in that woods, and of how they would miss her mother, who had been, in her quiet way, such a friend to them. With this thought came another—that she would devote her lonely life to the betterment of their condition. There did not seem to be much left for her in life except loneliness—utter, desolate loneliness. With this feeling weighing on her heart, she went to her desk, lighted the lamp, and commenced a letter. It ran:

“MY DEAR ROCHAMBEAU:

“It has been a long, long time since I heard from you, and you may, perhaps, be surprised to

receive this letter from me, since my last to you remains unanswered. But I think it will be better to write you freely and frankly, that you may understand my real feelings, and that in the future we may always be the good friends that there is every reason we should be.

"The great sorrow which has come to me in the death of my mother would soften any feeling of resentment that I might have cherished on account of your unexplained neglect; but, to tell the whole truth, I have felt none.

"I do not mean in any way to indicate that you have treated me badly, for ever since we both made the mistake of fancying we were in love with each other I think we have honestly tried to do what was right. But, Rochambeau, I do not feel that it is saying anything against either of us when I make the statement that we are entirely unsuited to each other.

"When we became engaged we were very young and very inexperienced, and, as we have grown older and have learned to look upon life more sanely, we have simply drifted apart. This conviction has been growing and impressing itself upon me for a long time, but I have waited until I was sure before expressing it to you.

"Still, it was a natural mistake for two young people to make, and there is no reason why we should regret it. The time can never come when I shall lose interest in you—no misfortune could

ever come to you without bringing great sorrow to me, and every day of my life I shall say a prayer for you.

"Do not misunderstand me, do not misconstrue my meaning, and do not let any sympathy for me in this hour of my great trouble move you to propose a renewal of the engagement which I now break, for I am sure that any closer tie than friendship would be disastrous to the happiness of both of us.

"I say this, fully realizing the lonely life I am mapping out for myself, and sincerely hoping that some one else may bring to you all the blessings that I know I never could.

"In conclusion, I think it is fair to tell you that a long time ago, before I ever met you, one night at a dinner there sat opposite to me one whose look and voice I never have been able to forget. When you and I were first engaged I looked upon this fancy as something too foolishly romantic to be considered; but whenever anything serious has come into my life, I have found that there is some mysterious influence, some clinging, unforgettable attraction, about that meeting which I do not pretend to understand. However, I am convinced that it has something to do with my destiny—perhaps nothing more than to show me the incompatibility between you and me.

"If I have written coldly, forgive me; if I have written weakly, it is because I have but poorly

expressed the feelings of a heart that has suffered.

"In the future always think of me as one who would wish you nothing but happiness.

"BETTY."

When the letter was finished, she laid her head on her arms, which were folded on the desk before her—and thought, and thought.

The time had come when she was alone in the presence of the Infinite, and in intense anguish of spirit she cried out, "O my God!"

In the cry was the death of her girlhood, and of all that had belonged to it. While she remained in this attitude of abject woe, her mind spanned the past, the present, the future, traveling at the wonderful rate that only a troubled soul can, and that brief time of agonizing sorrow gave birth to her womanhood, and saw it well on its way to maturity.

She thought of the long ago when, as a little girl, she had wondered whether she would ever "get religion" or "fall in love," and she pondered over the growth of her spirit, of her awakening to the fact that she had a faith such as Raphael Aben-Ezra had prayed for, a faith which had taken hold of her life and had made it worth living. She knew not how it had come nor whence, but she was sure whither it was taking her—toward that happy home in heaven where her

mother had just been gathered unto her people. She did not doubt for an instant that a joyous welcome had been accorded her dear mother somewhere in the realms beyond—beyond all human ken, all science, all research, all worldly wisdom, beyond everything on this earth except the glory of the one word—Faith.

Her mother had died with the characteristic fearlessness and untrembling belief of her people, and it was not pity for the departed, but the sense of her own bereavement that wrung her soul. She had heard a sermon once on the "Fatherhood and Motherhood of God"—it had impressed her then; it consoled her now. It was sweet to think that God's love was not only the strong love of a father, but the tender love of a mother as well, and this one little memory which the good minister had added to the treasure-house of her soul was worth thousands of words of well-meant condolence.

In breaking with Rochambeau she had severed forever another tie, and with this thought came the recollection of the other old wonder, "Would she ever really fall in love?" She was sure, now, that there was no need to wonder, to argue with herself about this. She had fallen in love, deeply, unmistakably, unchangeably, that evening when she first saw Ralph Redwood. Let the practical, common-sense people of the world say what they pleased—she realized at last that this thing was

true. She was no weak, sentimental girl whose head had been turned by fancy novels; she was now a woman of deep feeling and deep thought, one who had lived and suffered, one who had been repeatedly wooed, and who had disdained such offerings as had been laid at her feet—with the one exception, the recollection of which now hurt her. She had seen enough, even in her limited circle of acquaintance, of the queer matches money and position had made, and she was glad in her humiliation that these paltry considerations had played no part in making her hope she could some day give Rochambeau her whole heart. It was such nobility of character as he had that had attracted her and had caused the mistake.

But, laying all these things aside, she knew now that she did love Ralph Redwood—there was no use trying to deceive herself. She had subdued this love as much as possible, had tried to crush it, to smother the last vestige of it, to make herself believe it did not exist, but whenever any shadow came into her life she realized more than ever that she loved him—loved him—loved him. Now, in the bitterest grief, the deepest sorrow of her whole life, she longed for him to console her. Rochambeau had forfeited his place in her heart forever—she had no wish for his presence. Never again would she struggle against that other strange love. She might never see Ralph Redwood again, but when his eyes had looked into

hers she knew that their souls had understood, and she would never battle any more against the inevitable. It was too harassing a warfare.

Perhaps God would, in time, bring happiness to this great love which she felt He had created, and she would bide that time; if, in the final summing up of the events of every life, she should find that this was a point in hers where her feelings had erred, and that it was intended for her to live always lonely, then she would make good use of her spinsterhood, and live it bravely. Surely there were enough flaws in the woof and warp of the fulfillment of many married persons' responsibilities to afford lifelong occupation to the unmarried, many duties left undone that should be performed, many stitches dropped that should be picked up. And perhaps it were as well to try to mend the careless work of others as to knit a broader band on to the handiwork of life. This mending business had fallen to the lot of many of the noblest, best people. Why should she shrink from it or disdain it?

She knew of instances, too, where people had forsaken the steady light of a true, though distant, happiness to wander after the glimmer of a phantom fancy that seemed nearer and more certain, and had thereby made shipwreck of their peace, and forfeited the dignity and meaning of their lives. She had fortunately escaped this shipwreck.

She knew that the future would be hard for her, that the time must come when she would long for help. She realized that, while it was possible for a courageous soul nobly to plan a life of self-abnegation despite the heartache that it caused, human nature, after all, was only finite.

She realized how keen was her desire for congenial companionship, how much more everything meant to her if shared by some one who could understand and appreciate her.

She sympathized with the simple lives of those about her, but by education and temperament she was not one of them.

The constant effort to help and improve them would, in time, drain her soul dry; for to be able to give out constantly without breaking down she knew one must get new, wholesome, helpful ideas from somewhere. Books alone could not satisfy her—she longed for real, human, living, present companionship.

When, at last, she raised her head the Terrell coat of arms, hanging above her desk, stared her in the face, and her eye fell upon the motto in big letters, "SANS CRAINTE."

Ah, that meant not only without physical fear, but without moral fear as well, and she would, with God's help, be worthy of her people.

There comes to everybody capable of deep feeling some supreme moment when everything seems slipping away, when nothingness seems paramount,

when loneliness seems overwhelming. Betty had passed through that critical moment, and had come out strong.

Feeling a desire for fresh air, she went to the window, and, raising the sash, looked out over the moonlit yard. As she did so the figure of a man glided stealthily out from behind one of the big oaks some distance from the house. The thought of her helplessness made her suppress a scream—an agony of disquietude swept over her. Perhaps the man had been watching her. He stole cautiously away through the garden, where all that was left of her precious mother lay, and disappeared toward the Flatwoods in the direction of old Ailsie Eddis' house. There was something apprehensive, timorous, about the man's action that suggested to her mind: "A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." She felt the need of all the fearlessness of a long line of Terrells.

CHAPTER XXV

A FEW days after the great sorrow had come to Betty, Aunt Lucy handed her a note one morning, saying, "The boy f'om Sweetbriar brung it."

It was Alice's handwriting, and tearing it open hastily she read:

"DEAREST BETTY:

"I reached home last night a broken-hearted woman. I have gotten a divorce from Barry. Do come to me at once. I would not ask this of you now, when you are yourself on the rack of distraction, but disgrace is a more bitter sorrow than death. All eyes are turned upon you with love, sympathy, and respect; they look askance at me, wondering how such a wretched thing could happen. I long to see you, to put my arms around you, to mingle my tears with yours. Come, I implore you.

"ALICE."

Betty put on her things hurriedly and went. She found the poor girl in a state of great nervous excitement, but, after they had wept and wept, she at last became quiet enough to tell her sad story. She was very much changed. Her eyes had a restless, watchful look in them, instead of the

old merry "don't care" expression. She was very thin, pale, and troubled, and when she spoke her voice sounded weak and unnatural in tone.

They were in the library. A wood fire crackled away on the hearth, but their hearts were insensible to its cheer.

"For a while after we were married," Alice began slowly, as if trying to recall something far away in the past, "I was very happy. Barry was most attentive and seemed proud of me. It was an unusually gay winter, he said, and I was almost swept off my feet by the brilliancy of the life we led. It was one round of gayety, and I was greatly admired. This pleased Barry, and I almost thought I was in heaven. Everything went on beautifully for a while. I had gorgeous clothes, and everything else my heart could wish. Some of the people said and did strange things for people of refinement, I thought, and sometimes when I was alone I felt like putting my head down and weeping at the thought that I should ever have come to associating with such people on terms of equality; but Barry said it was all nonsense—that I was simply behind the times, that this was a broad age, and that the things I complained of were no longer considered bad form. But I didn't like it, and I began to grow more and more uncomfortable.

"I met many pleasant people, however—people of whom the most fastidious couldn't complain

—but I soon realized that they didn't appeal to Barry as much as did the coarser-grained. I made up my mind not to be surprised at things that other people said and did, for I had married Barry, and I really wanted to be happy with him; but I made a solemn promise to myself to observe strictly all the proprieties that I had always been brought up to consider as a part of gentle breeding. You know mother is a lady, and I never was associated with coarse people. She has a lot of strange notions, but she is thoroughly refined.

"This stand of mine made me unpopular with Barry's intimates. Then a very handsome woman came to New York, a divorcée. Barry was fascinated by her startling beauty, and soon became attentive to her. I saw at once the way things were drifting, and I made up my mind not to sit at home and mope while my husband went into society. The first time an open break came between us, he told me that he would not be home to dinner one evening—that he was invited out, and would go to the theater afterward. He said it as coolly as if I had been one of his house-servants.

"‘All right, Barry,’ I answered composedly, without showing a bit of surprise; ‘I won't be home any way. I am going out, too,’ I added, in the most matter-of-fact way.

"‘Where are you going?’ he asked, evidently disconcerted at the way I took it.

"‘Perhaps to the same dinner that you are,’

I answered coolly; 'people usually ask husband and wife together, don't they?'

"He couldn't say anything, and from that time he went his way and I went mine, but we were on good terms apparently, and he pretended to be proud of the attention shown me. I think, really, my indifference won his admiration—he has a queer nature. Then he grew to drink heavily, and at times was very disagreeable, so I determined to let him alone. I saw that to remonstrate with him for any of his shortcomings would probably bring on a final scene. It had to come any way, but I was determined not to be the one to precipitate it. It was awfully hard to know what to do—I felt so alone in the world.

"One evening—I heard afterward—the startling beauty had snubbed Barry at a dinner she gave (this happened at a summer resort), and he came over to the hotel, where I was sitting in the ballroom talking to several men whom we both knew. He was in a horrid temper on account of the snub, and when we were left alone he spoke to me most outrageously—he said things I never could forgive. No one can go beyond a certain point with me. Then he said he didn't intend to speak to me till I could learn to conduct myself with becoming dignity. My contempt for him was beyond expression.

"That very day he had come to the hotel after an absence of several days in the city, and it was

the divorcée, not I, who knew of his coming, and drove down in her trap to meet him. A friend of mine found that he was coming, and that the lady was boasting of her conquest at my expense, so I made up my mind to be equal to the occasion. When they drove up I was just starting out with Adolphe de Brune, who had arrived that day, and I greeted them with such amiable indifference that their chagrin was noticeable to every one on the hotel veranda.

"For a long, long time after that night Barry and I didn't speak; then, one evening when we were back in town, I was sitting alone in my sitting-room, feeling very depressed, when he came in. The strain of the troubled life I was leading was beginning to tell on me, and I was trying to make up my mind to take some definite step to extricate myself.

" 'Alice,' he began, 'I think you have been punished enough for your indiscretion at the hotel last summer. I am willing now to forget the past. I think you have learned to conduct yourself with more dignity.'

"My blood was boiling, but I let him continue, and I never looked up from my writing.

" 'I don't care to hold your conduct over you forever. Our not going out together is being commented upon, and I think it will be better for us to go together to Mrs. Bartlett's ball to-morrow night.'

" 'Barry,' I said composedly—it was the effort of my life—'are you through?'

" 'Yes,' he answered.

" 'You can never go with me anywhere again,' I said in that even way so exasperating to one who expects submission; 'I don't care any more for you than I do for the stones in the street.'" Alice spoke in the tones of one indifferent to anything that life could bring.

"I am glad you did," Betty declared with warmth. "If there is anything I despise it is a cringing woman."

"From that time he began to do his best to win me again, but, Betty, every feeling I had for him was one of repulsion. I couldn't stand him, and everything he did to please me only irritated me. I had lost all confidence in him, and I knew he would only throw me aside again like a cast-off rag if I were weak enough to let him think I cared.

"Then I was tortured to know what was best to do—I couldn't keep on living that wretched life—and, with all my horror of divorce, I decided it was the only alternative. So I went to Dakota to get it as quietly as possible on the ground of incompatibility. He wrote to me constantly while I was there, pleading with me, making all kinds of fair promises, but my faith in him was all gone. I couldn't abide him—so I've come back—come back to Sweetbriar, and to you."

They wept again, and Betty's heart was too full for words.

"I never lose sight of the fact that I am divorced for one minute," Alice continued bitterly. "I think of it when I'm awake, and I am conscious of it when I'm asleep. I am tortured when I meet strangers, and I dread to meet my friends for fear they are no longer friends."

This aroused Betty.

"That is stuff and nonsense, Alice," she said sharply; "how could you have done otherwise under the circumstances? You've put Barry out of your life now, or rather he has put himself beyond the sympathy of respectable people, and you have no right to take such an over-sentimental view of the situation. He is unworthy—he always was unworthy—of the love of a good woman."

"He married the divorcée the day after our divorce," Alice said. Then she continued sadly, "There is nothing left for me. I threw away Henry's love, and when I did I threw away my own happiness."

"I don't believe you could throw away his love," Betty answered solemnly, remembering her interview with him among the lilacs. "He told me he would always love you, always stand by you, no matter what happened."

"Did he say that?"

"He did." Then there arose in Betty's mind

again the great problem of divorce and her own promise to Henry to help Alice. It seemed hard that the lack of judgment of a girl under the age of twenty-one should forever debar two people from happiness.

"It is a bitter situation," Alice answered, "but I could not live with Barry when I couldn't respect him." There was something in the dignity of the way she said this that surprised Betty, who had always looked upon her as a person thoroughly attractive on the surface, but not to be depended upon when put to the test.

"I have a horror of married flirts," Alice continued, "and Mrs. Stephenson always said a Virginia girl did all of her flirting before she married, never afterward. I was not prepared to expect such a thing as a man flirt—and that my own husband."

It dawned on Betty that Alice's errors were due principally to the frivolity of those who had guided her, and that it was a terrible thing for this fatherless and motherless girl's life to be ruined by a single mistake made in youthful recklessness. The tide of public opinion about divorce was greatly changed since Mrs. Pembroke's day, and Betty, with her knowledge of the sadness of an uneven marriage, felt less shocked at the word than Alice did. She could never quite forgive her father for having wrecked her mother's happiness, and she looked upon Alice's present

situation as a far better one than her mother's bondage had been. But in estimating Alice's character she could not then foresee that out of great trouble would come great strength; that for years she would lead a useful life and would resist Henry Harvey's pleadings to marry him, and that she would never consent till at last the news came that Barry had died suddenly while yachting with a party on the Mediterranean.

"I have put a barrier between his love and myself forever," Alice resumed, in a hopeless tone. "Other divorcées marry again, but I have suffered so much mental torment I have reached the state of wanting to do what is strictly right. You don't think I have any right to marry again, do you?"

Betty remembered the divorcée she had seen in New York, and how shocked she had been at her careless levity; then she thought of her poor mother, and of how much she had borne. They seemed extreme cases. She didn't think either could be right.

"Your own conscience will have to answer that question," she answered, not knowing what she ought to say.

"But I've been tortured by my own conscience. I don't want it to answer. I want yours to tell me what is right. I trust you."

"Mine would tell me never to marry again, but it has no right to dictate to you." Betty's own

struggle with the thought of loneliness had been too recent to make her want to sacrifice another to a similar fate. "It might be right for you to marry again—after a while." She was thinking of Alice's weakness, of her inability to stand alone. "But don't do it for years, Alice—*not for years.*"

CHAPTER XXVI

WHILE Betty was having the struggle out with herself that March night at The Oaks, Ralph Redwood sat in the parlor of an apartment in East Fifty-eighth Street, New York, where for the past eight years he had shared bachelor quarters with Mr. Herbert Hudson, an older and far richer man.

Young Redwood had that day been able to cast aside a burden that had been weighing upon him ever since he came to New York with a trouble on his heart and a shadow on his name—no wonder he was experiencing a feeling of relief.

While he sat before the little wood fire, turning the leaves of the book he held in his hands, Mr. Hudson came in ready to go out to a dinner. He looked at him intently for a moment.

"Ralph," he then said jovially, "there is nothing now to keep you from getting married, and I want to see you bestirring yourself, instead of moping with a book in your hand all the time."

"Why don't you practice what you preach?" Ralph asked, amused at such advice from such a source.

"I am beginning to try to practice it," the other candidly admitted, and, having drawn on his

overcoat, he put on his hat and left the younger man to his thoughts, his dreams, and his reveries.

Ralph Redwood continued to turn the leaves of his book. His eye fell, here and there, upon heavy marks he had made on the margin of certain passages that had impressed him profoundly. First he read:

"I am always the same: the being who wanders when he need not, the voluntary exile, the eternal traveler, the man incapable of repose, who, driven on by an inward voice, builds nowhere, buys and labors nowhere, but passes, looks, camps, and goes. And is there not another reason for all this restlessness in a certain sense of void? Of incessant pursuit of something wanting? Of a longing for a truer peace and a more entire satisfaction? Neighbors, friends, relations—I love them all; and so long as these affections are active, they leave in me no room for a sense of want. But yet they do not fill my heart, and that is why they have no power to fix it. I am always waiting for the woman and the work which shall be capable of taking entire possession of my soul, and of becoming my end and aim.

"I have not given away my heart; hence this restlessness of spirit. I will not let it be taken captive by that which cannot fill and satisfy it; hence this instinct of pitiless detachment from all that charms me without permanently binding me:

so that it seems as if my love of movement, which looks so like inconstancy, is at bottom only a perpetual search, a hope, a desire, and a care—the malady of the ideal. . . . Life, indeed, must always be a compromise between common sense and the ideal, the one abating nothing of its demands, the other accommodating itself to what is practicable and real.”

“Poor fellow! he must have had hard luck,” Ralph Redwood mused. “‘A compromise between common sense and the ideal’! I certainly have every right to believe in the ideal. If I have not found it in friendship, surely I have come so near it that I have no right to complain. When all the world seemed against me and mine, Herbert Hudson and John Pembroke stood by me, and pushed my interest with an unfailing kindness that demands my recognition of the exalted heights to which human unselfishness can attain. If I have found such friendship in the midst of all my woe, surely I can hope for a love that will fill my heart some day.”

And then he read again:


“I sought the love which springs from the central profundities of being. And I still believe in it. . . . I invoke, I await, and I hope for the love which is great, pure, and earnest, which lives and works in every fiber of my being, and

through all the powers of my soul. And even if I go lonely to the end, I would rather my hope and my dream died with me, than that my soul should content itself with any meaner union."

As he turned the pages, in his imagination Betty's face fluttered between the leaves. Her voice still sung in his soul—he had thought of her every day of his life since he met her—he had loved to be left alone so that in his thoughts he could be undisturbed. Why should he go lonely to the end after having met such a woman? He recalled, with a glow of satisfaction, the radiant expression of her face, the vivacious charm of her manner, and the exquisite refinement that completely won him.

Again he read:

"Women wish to be loved without a why or wherefore: not because they are pretty, or good, or well-bred, or graceful, or intelligent, but because they are themselves. All analysis seems to them to imply a loss of consideration, a subordination of their personality to something which dominates and measures it. They will have none of it, and their instinct is just. As soon as we can give a reason for a feeling, we are no longer under the spell of it. We appreciate, we weigh, we are free, at least in principle. Love must always remain a fascination, a witchery, if the em-



pire of woman is to endure. The mystery once gone, the power goes with it."

He was in love with Betty—there was no doubt about that, though the reason had no definite explanation—and he felt perfectly sure that when he knew her better she would be to him all his fancy had pictured. With the impulse of the moment warm in his heart, he wrapped the book containing the marked passages and addressed it to Miss Betty Pembroke in Virginia.

That morning John Pembroke had told him of her recent bereavement, and of her lonely condition. The last of the debt that he owed for the sake of his name had that day been paid—why shouldn't he take a vacation and go to Virginia? Go to the voice that was singing, "I am waiting for thee in the hush of the corn"? He was tired of waiting, tired of suspense, and his soul longed for its affinity. Would he find her the same? Had the intervening years changed her? Was it possible that he might find it all an illusion—find that he had been feeding his soul on something that was impossible, find that that "first impression" had been all a mistake—a bitter, long-drawn-out, alluring mistake that would leave him sadder and lonelier than before?

He thrust aside such thoughts as unworthy of those beautiful eyes that had looked into his soul and of the sweet voice that had haunted him un-

ceasingly, unworthy of the melancholy in the words that seemed now to float to him from the distance:

“In the garden of sleep, where red poppies are spread,
I wait for the living, alone with the dead.”

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEN Betty's letter to Rochambeau was delivered at his boarding-house in the little Western town whither he had gone to seek his fortune, the landlady laid it on the table in his small sitting-room, where he found it when he came in from his supper. He had not met with great business success, and it had made him bitter. By degrees he was learning that affability counts for something in this world as well as pluck and perseverance.

He was ashamed of his actions, ashamed of being jealous of Betty's admiration for her Cousin John—which was the cause of his not having written—and ashamed of the ungenerous nature which would deny her the innocent pleasures which she might enjoy; for his gloomy "mood" was now over, and he felt quite cheerful. It was with a feeling of mingled pleasure and uncertainty that he opened the letter. He loved her devotedly after his peculiar fashion, and he was keenly aware of having acted shabbily.

Its contents—her mother's death and his unqualified dismissal, together with the acknowledgment that she was unable to overcome a fancy for some one else—were like a wild dream to him.

His first impulse was to write to her and to pour out all the love and sympathy he had been with-

holding so foolishly, but every letter he commenced seemed utterly inadequate to meet the occasion. How could he declare his unalterable devotion, plead for pardon for his inexcusable neglect, and express his profound sympathy with her in her loss, all in one breath?

That there was no bitterness in her letter stung him to the quick; that in her desolation she looked to him for nothing seemed more than he could bear. A row of her photographs adorned his mantel, and he almost felt like holding out his hands to them in mute appeal. She meant so much to him—so much more than he himself had fully realized till he felt she was slipping away from him, so much more than she would ever know.

He gave up trying to express his feelings in a letter—he had never been gifted in that line—and he determined he would go East as soon as possible, and make his peace with her face to face.

Oh, Rochambeau, Rochambeau! you little know. The moorings that fastened the ship of your life to the anchor of that heart have been cut. You are wandering far out at sea on troubled waters, and you will never reach that port again.

Love can die in a minute, in a flash, at a look, at a word. Betty's love for Rochambeau had died of a long, lingering disease—incompatibility. It was dead. Dead!—what a cold, stark, forlorn, awful word it is!

That same day, early in the afternoon, Ralph Redwood arrived in the little Virginia town. A stranger in a strange land, he made his way up the side of a sloping hill to the small hotel that overlooked the station, and there made inquiries about the country.

"I wish to spend some time here," he told the clerk, "and I would like to know whether there is a boarding-house in the Cherry Hill neighborhood."

The accommodating clerk led the way to an interview with Joe, Mrs. Barnes' colored driver, who was at the station with his speckled grays.

"Has Mrs. Barnes room for anybody else right now, Joe?" he asked, while Joe was taking the measure of the good-looking stranger.

"Yas, suh. Her got plenty o' room, 'cayse I jes' done seed Mr. Bush off on dat train, an' dat leaves de bes' room in de house fer de gemman ef he want it." As it was evident that Joe was willing to strike a bargain, Ralph Redwood's baggage was put into the wagon without further ado.

Mrs. Barnes was on the porch when they arrived at her house, and after giving Ralph Redwood a cordial welcome, she began to question Joe.

"Did Mr. Bush get off, Joe?"

"Yassum," he answered, fumbling to pick up the reins he had dropped when he took out the baggage.

"When did he say he would be back?" asked the business-like widow.

"He didn't say," and then, seeing from her face that that reply wouldn't do—for Mr. Bush had promised to send word by him—he repeated, "he didn't say, but he *look* like he was comin' back nex' *Wednesday*."

Then Joe whistled to his horses, and disappeared around the corner of the house.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE little Cherry Hill church was all fresh and sweet for the Palm Sunday services. It had undergone a great change that spring. It had been painted white on the outside, and the blinds were just waiting to match the leaves that would soon be in bud. The inside had been ceiled in light oak, and the pulpit had been enlarged to a semi-circle, around which was a chancel railing. In front of the pulpit stood a little table where Betty had placed a bowl of sweet violets out of the beds at The Oaks, and these wafted a delicate perfume over the church, while the palms, rubber-plants, and ferns, which had been contributed for the occasion by the ladies of the neighborhood, were in pleasing contrast to the grayness outside; for the March sharpness had not encouraged vegetation to venture forth as yet.

The five denominations that worshiped there—Baptists, Methodists, Disciples, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians—were all in evidence, mingling with a brotherly love that taught a grand lesson to the unbeliever, who might hold that there was discord in the Christian ranks. They were different companies of one great army, following the same Leader to the goal of peace and good-will.

Betty had gone to work bravely to fill her mother's place as nearly as she could, and as she was endeavoring at the same time not to drop any of the duties that had hitherto been her own, she was at her post at the little organ. She was simply attired in deep mourning, and her face was as pretty, though far sadder and more thoughtful, as when Barry Burton had watched her there those years before. She was paler than usual, and more spirituelle, and the kindly faces of the congregation turned toward her in deep compassion as she sat looking over the hymn book.

The services were, as usual, opened with "The Palms." Betty sang the first verse:

"Palm trees and flow'rs unite upon our way,
Greetings they bring us of joy and gladness;
Lo! Jesus comes, all hail auspicious day:
He comes to banish gloom and sadness."

Ralph Redwood and the rest of the congregation joined her in the glad chorus:

"People and tongues shall chant His praise,
Tune every voice,
His name be gladly singing Hosanna!
Glory to God!
Glory to Him who comes bringing salvation!"

Her quick ear detecting an unknown voice of fine quality, she looked up to locate the stranger. Her eyes met that unforgotten look, which had become a thousand times more tender as he realized from her sad face what her suffering had

been. The thrilling sensation of their first meeting again possessed her, and she almost forgot to lead the chorus. He saw her confusion—the fact that she did not observe him with indifference filled him with such emotion that he felt his hand tremble as he touched the back of the pew in front of him. Both hearts were beating wildly when she sang the last verse:

“Rejoice aloud, Jerusalem, the holy!
Now let thy notes, joyous in praise ascending!
God, by His grace of Bethlehem, the lowly,
Shall hear in grateful song our voices blending,”

and when they took up the chorus again they were oblivious of everything except that they were singing together.

The congregation was curious about the stranger, for Mrs. Barnes had reached church after the services had commenced, and had had no opportunity to talk about her New York boarder. The Cherry Hill people eyed him sufficiently, however, to know that he had nice, good, broad shoulders; that his face was most attractive, and that he wore well-made brown riding-clothes. Altogether, the advent of such a prepossessing person on a frosty Sunday in March at the little church was quite puzzling.

After the benediction was pronounced, the neighbors mingled together to exchange greetings, and to inquire about one another's families, and while this was going on, Ralph Redwood

moved to the side of the little organ. He and Betty shook hands in such a matter-of-fact way that no one would have guessed that the thought of each had sent a thrill to the heart of the other ever since their one former meeting. But the outward manner by no means indicated the emotions that throbbed within—it was the composure born of long years of self-control.

When Betty and her stranger friend drove out of the Cherry Hill churchyard, the prophetic souls of the congregation, solving the mystery of their future, discussed the matter openly, as though it were a settled fact; and after having waited on the table at The Oaks during dinner that day, Aunt Lucy said to herself, as she washed up the dishes:

“’Tis cert’n’y de right one dis time—I knows fum de way dey looks at one another.”

CHAPTER XXIX

SPRING had come in earnest. The country was as sweet as April could make it—soft shades of young and tender green burst into bud upon the mountains, fields, and Flatwoods, and as the time advanced, took on a darker and richer hue.

The large apple orchards were in full bloom, and profuse, bewildering blossoms gave out a fragrance which was refreshing. Cherry trees in snowy robes and peach trees in bright pink were scattered here and there over the country, peeping out of the edges of the mountains, standing magnificently on conspicuous hillsides or attracting attention to small cultivated plots in the Flatwoods. Red-bud streaked its way along the roadsides, wild plum trees vied with the cherry trees in loveliness, and weeping-willows seemed to be dropping their verdant branches.

In the old-fashioned garden at The Oaks the beds of sweet violets bloomed luxuriantly, jonquils and daffodils lifted their showy heads, and lilies-of-the-valley, pure and dainty, and delicately aromatic, nestled close to their stalks. Periwinkles had formed a thick coverlet over little Sallie's grave, and cut flowers, which were constantly renewed by Betty's loving hands, concealed the naked earth of the more recent mound.

Ralph Redwood spent most of his time at The Oaks, which became more and more lovely as it put on its newly made spring attire, piece by piece.

The more he saw of Betty and of her every-day life in her own home, the more she seemed to him the ideal woman of his imagination; the woman who had won his heart by her beauty and rare fascination he saw could hold it by her real worth.

But could he win her love?—and, if so, had he any right to ask her to take a name which was under a shadow? For eight weary years he had borne all the bitterness of an undeserved disgrace, had struggled to free himself and his, had faced the inscrutable future with a stern hopefulness which was success-compelling. He knew that so far as purity and honor and integrity and manhood were concerned the Redwood name was above reproach, and he deemed it weakness to cower under the fact that some had dared to accuse his father of dishonesty, and that circumstances had been such that he could not prove his innocence. But Betty might not take this view of it. She came of a proud race, and she might shrink from connecting herself with a family whose escutcheon had been besmirched by the foul tongue of slander.

And yet the happiness of his life depended upon her decision, and he felt that it was but fair to her and to himself to lay the whole matter before her.

The month of April in all its beauty was slipping by. He was like one enchanted, but this

witchery, this fairy life, could not last unless he could be sure of the woman he loved—be sure of her companionship for life.

And how did Betty stand in this matter?

She had read over and over again those marked passages in the book which had come from the unknown source, and they were so exactly the secret feelings of her own heart that they had almost frightened her. Not long after his arrival Ralph had had occasion to send her a note, and she had instantly recognized his handwriting as the same as that on the cover of the book. Doubt made way for knowledge, misgiving gave place to certainty. She had been afraid; now she was satisfied. He understood the subtle intricacies of her character even better than she did herself. Those marked passages explained the demand of her heart for a love which could satisfy that heart.

As visitors to the Cherry Hill community usually took a trip to Monticello, Ralph requested Betty one bright afternoon to go with him to that shrine of American patriotism. The April day had touched the landscape with a wonderful tenderness, the birds were reveling with all their might, and the broad expanse of green of the mountains on the left and of the Flatwoods on the right made a splendid setting for the vistas that lay before them. The two Cherry Hills, gorgeous in their wealth of blossoms, which were just

beginning to fall like sweet-scented snowflakes, were inviting bowers of loveliness.

"You must get yourself into a becoming mood of patriotic sentiment fully to enjoy this trip," Betty suggested laughingly, as they turned Bird's head toward the northeast when she came out of the gate of The Oaks, "and when you are sure you are ready, I'll tell you about this historical country." Betty and Bird were inseparable. He had urged her to let him use his trap, but Bird was like an old friend, and her companionship was dear to her mistress.

"I am thirsting for knowledge. Proceed as soon as you will," he begged. He loved his country, and its history was interesting to him.

"Take your mind back to a time when this road was only a path through a forest," she began; "imagine those mountains covered with snow, a bleak wind blowing, a penetrating chilliness, the country even much more thinly settled than now. That was the way it was when Mr. Jefferson brought his bride home to Monticello."

"I notice you always say 'Mr.' Jefferson—the people at large speak of him as Jefferson," he remarked.

"Well, we have a neighborly feeling for him, you know. That makes a difference," she laughed. There was sadness even in the way she laughed—the old touch of humor was gone.

"No doubt it does," he answered, smiling.

"But I have made you digress. He was on his way home with his bride?"

"And she was Martha, the daughter of John Wayles, of Charles City, and the widow of Bathurst Skelton. He had married her New Year's Day, 1772, and they had, no doubt, come up the James River to Scottsville. They had to come through here to reach Monticello. They stopped at Blenheim, which was the home of the Carters then, and they expected to spend the night there, but learning that the family was absent, they decided to proceed on their journey. The snow-storm had so increased in violence that they had to leave their vehicle and make the rest of the way on horseback. The trip was slow and tedious; at times great drifts of snow blocked their way, and they had to ride around the trees and then get back into the narrow path. As there was no place to stop and rest, they had to struggle on. Night came on, and the cold was increasing; at last they reached the steep mountainside, and, climbing it, arrived at Monticello—to find the house closed and dreary. The plucky couple were cold and hungry; it was not a welcome such as one would choose for a bride. But Jefferson was equal to the occasion. He made a rousing fire in the pavilion-room, found some cake and a bottle of wine, brought out his 'fiddle,' and in a little while the place became as cheery as the song and mirth of two happy young hearts could make it."

"Everything here has historical associations," Ralph said, deeply impressed. "It is wonderful what footprints Jefferson left on the sands of time."

"You can see his touch on every side," Betty resumed, "in the architecture of the county, in the democracy of the people, in the simplicity of their mode of living, in the high estimation in which education is held—everywhere the effects of his influence are felt. I am being surprised constantly by fresh evidences of it. I read the other day that it was he who established the custom of sending a President's annual message to the houses of Congress."

"Isn't there some story about his escaping when Tarleton made his raid?" he asked.

"Yes, the Legislature was holding its session in the town. It was in June, 1781, and the British commander was seen by John Jouett, a native of this section, passing Louisa Court House at a rapid rate. Jouett suspected their object, leaped on his horse, and, knowing the roads, took the shortest cut, and got here first. He sent a friend to Monticello to warn Mr. Jefferson, who was then Governor. I've often thought that ride of Jouett's compared with the midnight ride of Paul Revere. Tarleton, so the story goes, reached Monticello, and rode up into the hall, where a print of his horse's shoe may still be seen, just as Mr. Jefferson slipped through the underground

passage and made his escape. He took the route along Carter's Mountain there," pointing to indicate the way he went, "and the shoes were put on his horse backwards to mislead his pursuers." Bird was trotting along briskly, and in a short while they came in sight of Ash Lawn.

"Over there was President Monroe's home," Betty continued. "He and Mr. Jefferson were friends. Both he and Madison were constant guests at Monticello." The house was back behind a hill, and was not visible from the road.

"You almost take me back to the enchanted time," Ralph said, looking at her and smiling. She spoke of the olden times as if they had been a part of her own life that had passed away.

"I am doing my best, you see," she laughed, "and I am giving you authentic accounts. They belong to the annals of the county."

He had meant to talk to her about more personal things, but he decided to put it off to the last. He looked at her in her simple mourning costume, and felt that he could never let her pass out of his life again. He felt like a man who had been on trial, and who dreaded to hear his sentence. He concluded that if it was to bring sorrow, the longer he put it off the better; if it was to bring happiness, it was something so good that he could afford to wait for it.

After a while they came to a brick lodge at the gate of Monticello, and she explained that it was

one of the few innovations since Jefferson's time. A large bell rang as they entered, sounding throughout the woodlands, and announcing to the people at the house the approach of strangers. They followed the road that ascends the thickly wooded side of the mountain, and a short distance from the lodge on the right of the road their eyes suddenly rested on the graveyard.

"It is still owned by Jefferson's descendants," Betty said, as Ralph got out and went up the little grass-grown incline to the high spiked fence to read the inscription on the monument beyond. "Congress made an appropriation for that fence and monument. The original monument, of coarse stone, was removed because it had been so disfigured by vandals. It now stands on the grounds of the University of Missouri. The old brick wall had to be torn down, as it was not sufficient to protect the monument from relic-hunters."

"What a shame," he said, trying to find an opening in the fence, that he might get a closer view of the things he so wanted to see. "An old brick wall would seem so in keeping with the place. I hate to see old things and old traditions pass away."

"It seems a pity for anything to be changed here," she agreed, talking to him from the trap. "Look at that oak," pointing to an enormous tree spreading its branches over the peaceful spot. "There's where Jefferson—you see I am falling

into the irreverent way of speaking of my old neighbor—and his dearest friend, Dabney Carr, used to study when they were boys. They promised each other that the first to die should be buried under its shade. Now they both sleep there, surrounded by those they loved best.”

“By the time we get through I shall be personally acquainted with them all, and shall be weeping that they are dead,” Ralph said, resuming his seat in the trap. He was fascinated with the bits of information she gave.

“Such things fill me with a tremendous solemnity,” she replied quietly.

Presently, after winding around the grounds, they drove up to a little gate. When they got out Betty stopped to show him the hole in the ground through which Jefferson made his escape from Tarleton.

“I wonder what’s in there now?” Ralph remarked, drawing closer to look at it.

“Rattlers, I ‘spec’, suh,” was the deferential suggestion of the old negro guide.

They drew back, laughing, and continued up the east lawn.

“Here is where Jefferson, enfeebled by age, came out to meet his old friend Lafayette, who came back to this country in 1824, after an absence of forty years.”

“How good you are on dates,” he said, and the look in his eyes conveyed to her clearly that he

would have liked to add, "You are good at everything, and altogether adorable."

The lawn was smooth and green, the trees that Jefferson planted had grown to massive size, a perfect stillness was in the air. Ralph's heart was in touch with the romance of the surroundings, and Longfellow's lines were in his mind:

"Sweet April! many a thought
Is wedded unto thee as hearts are wed;
Nor shall they fail, till, to its autumn brought,
Life's golden fruit is shed,"

he quoted with meaning in his voice.

Betty apparently understood the quotation, but not his tone.

"They say the meeting between them was most pathetic," she continued. "The four hundred men who witnessed the scene were moved to tears."

They had reached the front of the house and stood looking at it.

"What a triumph of symmetry and proportion!" he exclaimed, with surprise and enthusiasm.

"It is the finest specimen of colonial architecture that we have," she assured him. "Mr. Jefferson was an enthusiast on the subject, and when he was minister plenipotentiary in Europe he never lost an opportunity of gazing upon what he considered a gem in that line. He was his own architect, and he collected his models abroad."

"The more I know of him the more wonderful

he seems," Ralph said thoughtfully, examining the Doric architecture of the exterior—the heavy cornice and massive balustrade, the portico, with its large white pillars. "These are not as large as the pillars at The Oaks," he observed.

"We think The Oaks a pretty nice old place," she said casually. "The red brick of which this house was built," she continued, "were made in kilns on the place. The clock over the door he designed himself. It was arranged with weights of Revolutionary cannon-balls to indicate the time of day and the day of the week. His weather-vane up there still shows the way the wind is blowing."

Passing into the lofty hall, she pointed out to him the print of the shoe of Tarleton's horse; then she showed him the beautiful floor of the drawing-room beyond, with its squares of wild-cherry bordered with beech.

"Though it is more than a century old, and has been trodden by the feet of five generations, look how smooth and glossy it is. There was a time after the war when the place wasn't kept up as it now is, and grain was actually stored in those corners. During the war they say the young people used to come here for picnics and dances. Mother and father used to come, and Southern officers often took part in the entertainments."

They passed through to the western portico, where the earth was banked up in the place of steps, and where the young grass was growing.

"The lawn, as you see, is an elliptic plane, formed by cutting down the apex of the mountain. It is six hundred feet east and west, and two hundred feet north and south. This point commands a view of the Blue Ridge for one hundred and fifty miles, and it is said to be one of the boldest and most beautiful horizons in the world."

"I can readily believe it," he said, thrilled by the magnificent grandeur of the outlook.

They had gone out on the western lawn. Looking back at the house, he spoke of the covered ways that extended north and south, and then, turning at right angles, led to the small pavilions, or offices, on either side of the lawn.

"The perfect symmetry of the whole makes it most attractive," she went on to say. "I have been so impressed with it that I have taken the trouble to inform myself as to the exact proportions. Those covered ways are ten feet wide; from where they turn at right angles to the pavilions is one hundred feet. The house stands a hundred feet from the eastern slope of the lawn, and together with the two porticos, it measures a hundred feet each way."

They turned to go back into the house, where they lingered to notice the Ionic finish of the stately apartments. "We are only allowed to see the public rooms," she explained. "The family comes back for the summer, so the house, as you see, is fitted up for private use. We shall have to

forego the pleasure of seeing the lofty dining-room, the library, and the bedroom where Jefferson died."

They made their way to the octagonal billiard-room, which with its spherical roof surmounted the drawing-room, and when he was amazed at the narrowness of the spiral steps, she called his attention to the fact that in planning the house Mr. Jefferson entirely forgot the staircase.

The house was quiet, the trees were beginning to cast long shadows as they looked out of the little round windows, and Betty realized that soon it would be time to start home.

"Can't you fancy stately ladies in rich brocades, with powdered hair and patches, smiling and bowing as they danced the minuet with courtly gentlemen wearing elaborate waistcoats and knee breeches and great buckles and ruffles of lace?" she asked, falling into the sentimental mood suggested by the place.

"And Jefferson over in that corner playing his 'fiddle,'" he finished out the picture for her.

They went down and out to the northern slope. It commanded a superb view of the town, the University, and the winding river, across which she pointed out the spot where Jefferson was born. The dome of the Rotunda at the University shone white in the last rays of the setting sun; a profound peace lay upon the world.

"Magnificent—magnificent!" Ralph exclaimed.

"I meant to go to the University when the time came for me to go off to college, but unfortunate circumstances prevented." He was wondering whether he would have met Betty had his plan been carried out, and if so—what then?

"Have you really enjoyed the trip?" she asked as, turning to leave, they faced the southeast, where lay the unbroken line of the boundless Flatwoods, seemingly in eternal repose.

"The half has never been told," he answered, and there was a deep significance in what he said.

It was a moment that he never forgot. He felt awed—the great human achievements of Jefferson were so inexpressibly small compared with the infinite power of the Creator, who had made it all—He that is without beginning and without end.

Ralph was strangely quiet when he handed her into the trap. He had only one more day to be with her—he could not risk its ruin by a possible rejection.

That night, after his early departure—he thought Betty needed rest after her long drive—Aunt Lucy went up to her young mistress' room to talk. She began, as usual, by looking at the pictures.

"What do you want to say, Aunt Lucy? I know you have something on your mind."

"Honey," she began, "he is sech a noble-look-in' young man. He 'minds me o' Marse Archie,

dough his hair is dark an' Marse Archie's is sandy streaked wid gray, an' his eyes is gray, an' Marse Archie's is blue—but dey has both got dat same *good* look in dyar faces dat'll be dyar when dey is a hunnerd years old, an' 'twill always make 'em han'some. When he laugh, his teef is fine, an' he is one o' dem strong, brave-lookin' men. 'Ain' narry one of 'em dese what you might call pretty men, but dey is gran'-lookin' men. Den, honey, he do wear sech nice brown clo's an' sech pretty shoes—dey is jes' as pretty as Mr. Billy Harrison's useter be. *I likes him.*" She had reached the door and had her hand on the knob. Her tall, thin figure was beginning to be a little stooped, and her face looked somewhat older and more solemn than usual.

"So do I, Aunt Lucy," Betty murmured.

"Thank de Lawd," was the comment on the other side of the closed door, as Aunt Lucy went away. "I couldn' byar de thought o' her bein' a ole maid, an' she sech a likely-lookin' child, too!"

CHAPTER XXX

THE striking events in every career have a strange way of measuring themselves out in singular proportion as to time, place, and manner. The average day in Betty's country life had been devoid of anything to make it stand out distinctly in her mind from many others. The afternoon of her last drive with Ralph would have been memorable, naturally, but it was to be impressed upon her in more ways than one.

They had chosen the long, quiet drive through the Flatwoods, where the roads were little traveled, so that they could talk uninterruptedly. When they turned around and started back toward The Oaks it was growing late. Bird held up her head and went along at a brisk trot despite her advancing years, till Ralph tightened the reins as they approached the narrow road that ran by the spout spring where the Flatwoods teamsters were accustomed to stop to drink and to water their horses in the trough.

A wagon, meeting them, had passed the spring, and the driver seemed to be waiting for a man who was drinking from the spout; his back was turned, his head bent down in the act of catching the water in his mouth as it flowed out. As they drew near, another wagon turned the sharp bend

in the road just beyond, and, to avoid a collision, Ralph pulled Bird to a sudden stop, so that Betty was on a level with the man and very near him. Startled by the commotion, the man straightened up and, turning quickly, looked her full in the face.

She shrank back as far from him as possible, overcome with fear and loathing. "It's the other murderer!" she cried. "John Reder's accomplice!"

The singular face, the shifting glassy blue eyes looking out from under shaggy brows that met in the middle, the hooked nose, the short, stubby mustache, were not likely to be forgotten.

He glared at Betty wildly, then in a high key, quivering with agitation, he jerked out:

"John Reder did it! Don't you hear her screamin'?"

The teamster, hearing his shrieks, ran to his side as he sank, collapsing, on the wet earth by the trough.

"My punishment is greater than I can bear," he muttered in a low, broken voice, as if pleading for mercy.

It all happened in a flash—it seemed an eternity. Ralph urged Bird forward, leaving the teamster to help the poor writhing creature.

"Don't be so excited—the man is crazy," he said, and then, when they were quite away from the horrid scene, speaking quietly, "Now tell me all about it."

His direct, manly, dependable way reassured her.

"That was the face of the other murderer I dreamed about long ago," she explained. "I couldn't forget that face if I were to live a thousand years, no matter what ravages time might stamp upon it."

Then she hurriedly told about the Metlow murder, so far away in the past, and her curious dream the night it happened; about the hanging of John Reder, and about her seeing the man on the ferryboat at Jersey City. It was all uncanny, uncomfortable; she hated to talk about it, especially about the feeling she always had had that somebody else had been mixed up in the crime—somebody who had never paid the penalty of his guilt.

"And that is the man who did help, though the only evidence I have is the dream," she said, trying to control her excitement over the man's presence in the neighborhood again. She recalled vividly the night she had seen him on the ferryboat and the startling headlines of the old newspaper—"Redwood," "Panic in Town," etc., but she refrained from mentioning this.

"I have seen that face before, too," said Ralph, catching the spirit of her perturbation, and puzzling to remember where he had seen the man. Suddenly it came back to him.

"He is a worthless fellow who used to hang

around our little town in Kentucky, and his name is Jim Stubb. I remember him perfectly now."

They were busily discussing the curious coincidence and wondering over its significance when they passed the Cherry Hill church and climbed the hill toward the main road. The little post-office building, standing in the corner where the two roads came together, concealed from their view a livery horse and buggy, coming along the main road, and the two vehicles came near running into each other where the roads met. They found themselves face to face with a handsome, well-dressed young gentleman—Mr. Rochambeau Rose, who had come East to look after his interests.

Rochambeau took in the situation at a glance, lifted his hat coldly, waited for them to drive into the main road, then turned his horse toward the Flatwoods, and drove furiously till they had had time to reach The Oaks.

Then he turned around and wearily retraced the journey back to town. At the hotel he wrote a hurried, incoherent letter, in which he enclosed the little golden harp, Betty's music medal, which had dangled from his watch-chain those long years. He sent this letter out to the Cherry Hill post-office by a special messenger, and the first train going West bore him away from the scenes he could no longer endure.

When old Anderson brought the mail from

the gate that afternoon, Betty unstrapped the wet bag and looked over the contents with no more particular interest than to find the newspapers for her father.

Although she had been greatly troubled at the meeting in the road, she was surprised to see Rochambeau's letter—she had hoped that her last to him would have been decisive.

She tore open the envelope, ran her eye hurriedly over the bitter contents, crushed the paper in her hand, and remembered only one word in the whole letter—"remorse."

Meanwhile the afternoon, with its threatening shower, had advanced into a gloomy evening, and Major Terrell was riding through the rain in response to a second summons to old Ailsie Eddis' cabin, which since her death had been uninhabited. As he rode along, the rain pelting his heavy mackintosh and running in streams from his black slouch hat, he thought over the strange message the Flatwoods teamster had brought him. The man had said to him:

"Major, a man jined me on the street in town yesterday, an' axed me ter bring him out ter ole Ailsie Eddis's house. I tole him old Ailsie had been dead too long ergo ter talk 'bout, an' then he said he was boun' ter go thar ennyway. He looked po'ly, an' he had a blanket an' a grip, so I thought he mought be a peddler—though he didn' look like them furriners that gen'ally ped-

dles. I gin him a lift, an' he was took with a great coughin' spell evvy mile or so. When we got down in the Flatwoods he had a fit at the spring—skeered Miss Betty Pembroke mighty bad—she an' her beau was passin'. Then he begged me not ter leave him thar in ole Ailsie's house ter die all by hisse'f, an' I stayed with him. One o' the wimmens down thar sent him some supper an' lent him a ole tick to sleep on—but I had a terrible time with him. He was out o' his head part o' the time, an' he kep' on sayin', 'Don't yer hear her screamin'? Don't yer hear her screamin'? ' Then he would say, 'Oh, my God, will that noise ring in my head forever?' He axed me if thar was enny good man roun' here that would come an' talk to him, an' I tole him I'd go after you."

This was by far the strangest visit Major Terrell had ever paid in his long years of church work, and he could not help feeling a little "queer" over it.

When he reached the cabin the teamster was sitting by the rough pallet on the floor, occasionally drawing the blankets up around the sick man so that only his head was visible. The air was damp and chilly. Major Terrell laid his wet hat and mackintosh in the opposite corner of the little room, and went over to the side of the rude bed.

"Let me feel your pulse, my friend," he said very gently.

"It is good to hear you call me a friend—it is

good to feel your innocent hands touch my guilty ones—it is good to have a good man near me once more,” said the stranger, pitifully. His pulse was beating wildly and his hands were burning with fever. Major Terrell laid his cool hand on the hot forehead, and a kindlier light came into the glassy eyes.

“It is good in you to come here, sir, and my soul already feels quieter for your presence; but for that screaming I might be fairly comfortable. Don’t you hear her screaming? Oh, my God, will that noise ring in my ears forever?” and the man looked around wildly, as though he would have liked to run from the sound.

“There is no noise; don’t be disturbed, I will stay by your side,” said Major Terrell, holding one of the feverish hands in his and speaking soothingly in his effort to quiet the mind so dismayed.

“I feel better than I have felt since the days when my mother sat by my bed, when I was a little fellow, and held my hand and spoke to me kindly,” whispered the dying man, more quiet now.

“I am passing away, sir,” he continued, struggling to revive, “and I want to make a confession before I go. I think if I can tell you all about the trouble I’ll feel better. The fact that a man like you can sit by a brute like me and hold my hand without showing any loathing makes me feel that the Divine power may yet reach me—even me, the

vilest of all vile sinners. Major Terrell, you may not believe it, but I came from good people. My father and mother were good, respectable people, and they tried hard to raise me right and to educate me, but I brought their gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. I can't talk long, but there are two things I must tell you. My whole life has been spent in the grossest kind of wickedness, and now remorse is gnawing at my soul. My blackest crime was committed here, and the place has drawn me back to it to die. I tried hard not to come back, but something made me do it—I couldn't help myself. Old Ailsie told me about the money hid at Brookwood. It was I who haunted that house and scared the young lady that night long ago. I had been hiding in the secret attic room.

"I've been forever coming back—I couldn't help it. One night lately I watched the other young lady through the window—she forgot to shut the blinds, and I wanted to get a glimpse of somebody that was good. She laid her head on her arms, and I could see she was grieving. It was all pitiful—awful. She, so young, so beautiful, so innocent, so sheltered, seemed in as much trouble as I, out in the cold with all my ugliness, age, and guilt. I turned away and slipped back to this old house of sin and sorrow. You remember the Metlow murder? I planned it in this house. Ailsie Eddis begged us not to do it, but

John Reder had told me about the large sums of money the old people had, and when we broke jail in Tennessee we came straight here to get it. These hands didn't do it—John Reder did it—but this mind planned it, and, Oh, my God! these ears heard it! Will I ever stop hearing it? Death—everlasting death—would be better, far better, than this torture.

“But that wrong is done—those good old people are beyond recall, where I soon shall be—but there are others in the world still suffering on account of my devilment. The night of the Metlow murder I couldn't take a cent of that ill-gotten money. I loathed everything connected with the place and the crime, and before the day broke I was on a freight train, stealing my way west again, those terrible screams still ringing in my ears. I had always been a gambler—after that I spent the entire time at the table—I had to drown that noise some way, and when I drank the screams were only the louder. Eight years afterwards, following the devil in me that always led, I robbed a bank in a little town in Kentucky. The president was a gentleman named Redwood—he had befriended me—I ruined him.”

Major Terrell listened intently, thoroughly aroused at the mention of the name of Redwood.

“Before morning,” the man continued, “I was out of the town and gone, the bank was looted, and I took pains that suspicion should point to

the benevolent gentleman who had befriended me when I lay sick in a hospital."

His voice was almost gone, but he managed to whisper feebly: "I implore you—not for my sake, for I am not worth it—but for the sake of those people to whom a good name means so much—clear up that mystery—tell them Jim Stubb did it. In my valise you will find a paper telling about it—take it to Kentucky—God will bless you if you do. I have always had sense enough to escape justice, but I can't escape from myself——" And the spirit had gone.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHILE Uncle Archie was hearing the pitiful confession of Jim Stubb in the little hut, Betty and Ralph Redwood, unconscious of it all, were sitting before a cozy wood fire in the parlor at The Oaks.

The room was fragrant with spring flowers; soft lights and utter stillness gave the place a touch of romance, which was increased by the soothing sound of the rain trickling down the shutters outside.

There seemed for them no other world, no other time, no other feeling than the hushed emotions of their own hearts, which had, as yet, found no expression in words. He was thinking how to begin a subject of such great moment. Overwhelmed by the silence, she plucked a spray from the bunch of lilies-of-the-valley pinned to the soft folds of her black dress, and smilingly handed it to him.

"Don't forget your last evening at The Oaks," she said.

"As it is my last," he replied, holding her hand before taking the offering it held, "I want to have a long talk with you—about myself—about

my past and my troubles, about my future and my hopes." His voice was tense with emotion.

"I am glad to hear you say that," she answered, gently withdrawing her hand, "for you have never told me about yourself, and I have been very curious to know more about you—to know the kind of life that has made you what you are. I have been on the point several times of asking you many questions which might have seemed inquisitive. Do tell me all about yourself."

The fact that he had grown to know her better, that each day had proved more fully that they were kindred spirits, that in their views and feelings they were in full sympathy with each other, made him feel sure of her intelligent comprehension, and the keen interest she now expressed encouraged him to begin.

"I am going to tell you the whole story from beginning to end," he said. "My father and mother lived at a beautiful old place just outside of a little town in Kentucky, and there my two sisters and I grew up. Father was a successful business man, and was president of the bank at home, besides holding other positions of trust. We three children had every advantage of education and travel. Everything went along smoothly with us, and we were an ideally happy family. I had finished my school career, and was preparing to go to the University of Virginia when a great trouble came upon us as suddenly

as a thunderclap out of a clear sky—a trouble that broke up our home, wrecked my poor father's health, and cast a stigma upon our good name."

He paused, as if he thought that perhaps that was enough, and she would not care to hear any more.

"Tell me all about it," she said, sympathetically, relieving his embarrassment.

"The morning I was to leave for the University," he continued, his voice growing husky as he spoke, "the teller of the bank sent for father in a great hurry—every penny of the deposits had disappeared during the night. It is useless to dwell upon harrowing details, but father was accused of having appropriated the money. The accumulated circumstantial evidence in the case was against him, so the lawyers declared, and there was nothing left for us to do but raise every cent we could to make good as nearly as possible the deficit. Our home was sold; everything went to reimburse those who had lost by the bank except a little property of mother's which she kept as a meager support for the family. It is so hard for men to act justly when money has been taken out of their pockets that they were not satisfied even with this sacrifice on our part, but declared that they would prosecute father to the full extent of the law unless the rest of the money could be raised. Your cousin, John Pembroke, and Herbert Hudson, who had always been friends of ours,

came down from New York and paid the remainder. They saved father from being—but I can't bear to talk about that part of it. They took me with them to New York, and I started life in their office. The horror of the whole thing, the faithlessness of those he had considered lifelong friends, and the gross, unpardonable injustice of it all completely crushed father; but mother was braver. She declared that she knew he was innocent, and that his persecutors knew he was innocent, and that the answer of a clear conscience before God was worth far more than a good name among men. She has never wavered in her cheerfulness through it all, and her strong spirit has helped to give me strength to pull through the trouble. Our business in New York has prospered. The day before I came down here I was able to pay back the full amount I owed Mr. Pembroke and Mr. Hudson, and I felt a free man at last."

"It is a noble freedom you have won," she replied heartily, "and I honor you for it. I used to wonder why people had to have sorrows—I begin to understand now that they make us stronger and better. Every beautiful character I have ever known has had the discipline of some kind of trouble."

Her words were as welcome to him as a gentle shower is to the earth after a long drought.

"I have told you my past and my troubles," he

continued, "and now I come to my future and my hopes. When I met you in New York I was in the midst of my struggle to even myself with the world; I felt tied, hand and foot. I felt I had no right to think of myself or my happiness till I could read my title clear to a fair name. I confess I was rather sad, rather downhearted. I was inclined to look upon the dark side of things, till I met you that evening—till I saw your face, so radiant in its fresh young beauty—till I felt the sweetness of your presence—till, I heard your voice, singing, 'O heart of my heart, O life of my life, I am waiting for thee in the hush of the corn'; then new light dawned upon me, new hope filled my heart—the image of your pure and lovely face has ever come before me in my highest and best moments, and the words of that song will sing in my soul forever."

His voice was shaken with feeling. Betty thought of her engagement to Rochambeau with absolute anguish. Her face flushed, and she involuntarily bowed her head.

"I could not come to you then," he continued; in a tone more and more pleading, "but I have thought of you every day of my life since. This thought has been so much the best part of me that I allowed myself to cherish the hope that when I could come I might find you waiting for me. My love for you is so intense, so all-absorbing, that I dare not think of my future without

you." They had risen and were standing in front of the fire.

"You did find me waiting for you," she answered firmly, thrilled by the knowledge of his love. She held out her hands to him. "There never was a time in my life when I needed you more. Your look and your voice have come to me always when I have been troubled and have needed sympathy. I felt that it had some strange influence over my life, but I fought against it—it seemed so improbable that I should ever see you again—and yet I could not help it.

"Then I became engaged—I hoped I was in love—but I wasn't; for it was you—you always—whom I thought of when I should have thought of my fiancé if I had really loved him. In some ways it might have seemed that he neglected me, but I knew always that it was I, not he, who was to blame; that I was trying to make a compromise between common sense and the ideal; that the ideal in my case would abate nothing of its demands; that I could not make it accommodate itself to what was practicable and real. I knew that I was not giving him the true love of my heart, though I tried to do it. I knew that the love I gave him did not spring from the central profundities of being, that it was not the love which is great, pure, and earnest, which lives and works in all the fibers of one's being, and through all the powers of one's soul.

"Then I broke the engagement—but not on the ground of his peculiarities. I told him that I had long ago formed a fancy—a fancy that I could not overcome, a fancy that was absolutely beyond my control. I am sorry that I tried to love him, for I know now what a mistake I made." Her voice was low and troubled as she spoke. She had told him her story as honestly as he had told her his. He drew her nearer to him, and she knew from the look in his eyes that his love had not been shaken.

"The present and the future are ours, darling," he said gently. "Let us put all of the past forever behind us—we belong to each other now. Neither life, nor death, nor time, nor eternity will ever part us."

He paused, and when he continued there was pain in every word. "Yet, if I believed it possible that my father was guilty of the great wrong attributed to him, I could never have brought myself to speak to you as I have done. But he is innocent—I know he is innocent—and I am offering you a name which ought to be——"

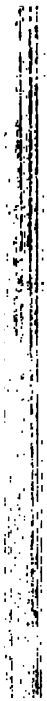
"And if I knew he was guilty," she interrupted with warmth, "and that you had struggled all these years to right his wrong, I should love you just the same. I have learned to value things according to their real worth to me, not according to the way they appear before this fleeting world. There is a mightier power than that of pride,

name, caste, position—love has nothing to do with such things. I should infinitely prefer loneliness to an affection which would not last forever—through all changes, through all time. My views are not for the practical, calculating world perhaps; but they are for me—and for you, because you understand.”

“I do,” was his reply, clear, deliberate, unhesitating, as he looked into the depths of her wonderful violet eyes. “It has been my hope, my prayer, to realize the one love—the love which is pure, strong, earnest, and *eternal!*”









1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

2. The second part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

3.

